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DISCOURSES OF MASCULINITY DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR:

AN ANALYSIS OF RICHARD ALDINGTON'S *DEATH OF A HERO* AND MULK RAJ ANAND'S *ACROSS THE BLACK WATERS*

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Introduction

During the First World War, approximately eight and a half million men served in the British Army. Of the all the colonies of the British empire, India contributed the largest number of men to fight in the Great War. However, India's participation in the war is frequently disregarded. Therefore, the war novel *Across the Black Waters*, written by Mulk Raj Anand, is innovative because it represents the perspectives of the Indian sepoys during the First World War. Indian author Anand was part of the well-known Bloomsbury group and has written his war narrative in English to attract a British audience and recollect the Indian participation and sacrifices during the war. Contrary to Anand, Richard Aldington is a British author who has written the anti-war novel *Death of a Hero*, which portrays the British perspective on the war. Unlike Anand, Aldington does not appear to refer to soldiers from other nationalities in the British army. Accordingly, this thesis will analyse the discourses of masculinity in Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Across the Black Waters*, and particularly how both novels represent the changing perception of masculinity during the Great War. In other words, the British and the Indians viewed masculinity differently before the First World War and this thesis will research if the war had a similar impact on both views or if they are still exceedingly distinct from each other. First of all, I will research the dominant masculine ideals of the British and Indian soldiers by examining R. W. Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity'. Secondly, this master thesis will explore Sarah Cole's views on 'friendship' and 'comradeship' as both relationships are valued by the soldiers themselves and develop the masculine identity of the men at the front. Thirdly, I will study Jessica Meyer's research on the martial and domestic identities of soldiers as part of the masculinity of the combatants. Lastly, this dissertation will examine shell shock during the First World War by applying the perspectives of Elaine Showalter and Joanna Bourke on the nervous disorder. As Indian

masculinity during the First World War is not studied as extensively by academic scholars as the masculinity of British soldiers, this thesis will attempt to demonstrate the similarities and differences between the Indian and British soldiers at the front by comparing the war novels *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters*.

Literary historian Paul Fussell's influential work in First World War studies, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, states that the ironic mode of storytelling is the dominant form of modern understanding of the horrors of the war (35). The use of irony allows authors to distance themselves from the events of the conflict which enables them to potentially critique the war (Fussell 35). Fussell's argument is debated by historian Jay Winter in his work *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Winter argues that the ironic mode is not the only form of remembering the Great War, as the affective stance has a potential therapeutic effect in commemorating and honouring the fallen soldiers of the First World War (5). Both views are present in Aldington's *Death of a Hero*. As mentioned before, the research on the experiences of the Indian sepoys at the front is not as extensive as the British ones. However, some prominent scholars have started to fill the gap. The works of literary scholars and historians Santanu Das, David Omissi and Trevor Dodman provide insight into the lives of the Indian sepoys at the front. This thesis will attempt to analyse the discourses of masculinity in Aldington's *Death of a Hero* in comparison to the masculinity of the Indian sepoys in Anand's *Across the Black Waters*, in order to examine how their shared war experiences affected their respective masculine ideals.

The first chapter of this master thesis will give a brief overview of the historical context of the First World War. In the following chapter I will outline the theoretical framework used to analyse *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters*. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first chapter explores the views on British masculinity and discusses R.

W. Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', Sarah Cole's and Jason Crouthamel's views on friendship and comradeship between men at the front and Jessica Meyer's research on British masculinity during the First World War. In the second section, this thesis will introduce the historical context of shell shock and the perspectives of Elaine Showalter, Joanna Bourke and Peter Leese on the nervous disorder. The final section deals with the views on Indian masculinity and the 'martial race' ideology. This master thesis will use the research of historian Heather Streets as the foundation of the 'martial race' theory. Furthermore, Trevor Dodman's ideas on sepoy shell shock, Santanu Das's study of Indian soldiers at the front and David Omissi's investigation of Indian letters will be applied in order to analyse the Indian discourses of masculinity in *Across the Black Waters*. The third chapter of this thesis will include the literary analysis of Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Across the Black Waters* separately. The final chapter will compare the discourses of masculinity in both war novels and attempt to answer the research question by analysing the differences and similarities of the discourses of masculinity in both novels. The comparison is followed by the conclusion of this master thesis and the bibliography.

1. Historical Context of the First World War

The First World War started on the 28th of July 1914 when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. The war was provoked by the assassination of archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary in Sarajevo, Bosnia, the previous month on June 28. Britain joined the war on the fourth of August 1914, a day after Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium. On 30 September 1914, the first two regiments of the Indian Expeditionary Force arrived at Marseilles to fight alongside the British and French soldiers against the common enemy, Germany. These two regiments counted approximately 24.000 Indian soldiers. This was the first conflict which was fought on a global level as it was an international conflict in which European countries along with the United States, Russia, the Middle East and other regions participated. The war was fought between the Central Powers, primarily Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey – against the Allied forces, mainly Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy and Japan. The Allies were joined by the United States in 1917. The Western Front was the main theatre of war. On the Western Front the Germans fought the Belgian, British, French and later American forces. However, the First World War was fought another front as well, the Eastern Front, where the Russians fought the Germans. The Great War novels *Across the Black Waters* and *Death of a Hero* are both situated on the Western Front, which why this master thesis will only focus on that region in this chapter. The Western Front is known for the trench warfare and the protagonists of both novels must endure the hardships of active service in those trenches. In England, people were optimistic at first and believed the war would only last a couple of months and would be over before Christmas that same year. No one could have predicted the war would last for four long years of combat. The conflict was far more horrific and bleak than first thought. As the war on the Western Front was fought in the trenches, the living conditions of the soldiers were terrible, especially during the winter. The trenches were cold, wet and

infested with rats and lice. These unhygienic living situations often resulted in diseases as those were liable to spread rapidly through the troops. The new technologies used in combat ranged from the modern machine gun, the rapid-fire field artillery gun, high explosive shells, tanks, fighter planes and zeppelins to the chemical weapons such as tear gas and the more lethal chemical, mustard gas. The Germans used the latter gas for the very first time during the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915. These new technologies resulted in high velocity combat which had never before been encountered on such a large global scale. On the one hand, the conditions at the front resulted in physical trauma such as death, wounds, injuries, dismemberment and diseases. On the other hand, the continued exposure to shellfire could develop psychological trauma such as the nervous disorder shell shock in even the best soldiers on either side of the front. I will elaborate further on shell shock in the second chapter of this master thesis.

The First World War officially ended on the 11th of November 1918 when Armistice was signed. According to figures produced in the 1920's by the Central Statistical Office, the total number of casualties of the British empire counted 956,703 men, killed in action or deceased due to injuries, wounds or diseases in addition to the men who were missing and presumed dead.

During World War I, the British recruited men from all the colonies of the empire. India's contribution counted more than one million men, including over 621,224 combatants and 474,789 non-combatants, who served overseas between August 1914 and December 1919 (Das "The Indian sepoy in the First World War"). Even though, India's contribution to the Great War was the largest of all British colonies, their participation is often overlooked in modern memory and commemorations. By joining the war and aiding Britain, Indians believed this would further their cause for Indian independence. In 1858, the British established the rule of the British crown in India after the Indian Rebellion of

1857. The uprising was also known as the 'Indian Mutiny' or the 'First War of Indian Independence'. India had previously been under the control of the East India Company.

India’s participation in the war did not result in Indian independence. In fact, after World War I, India’s relation with Britain became more strained due to the British slaughter of innocent Indians on April 13, 1919. This confrontation is known as the Massacre of Amritsar or Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre. The British troops fired on a large group of unarmed Indians in Amritsar. Several hundred people were killed and hundreds more were wounded. On the 15th of August 1947, India finally gained independence from the British rule.

2. Theoretical Framework: Discourses of Masculinity and the First World War

2.1 British Views on Masculinity

This section will give an overview of some significant discourses of masculinity and the First World War in order to appropriately analyse Richard Aldington's anti-war novel *Death of a Hero* and Mulk Raj Anand's Indian war novel *Across the Black Waters*. Firstly, I will introduce the influential work on masculinities by R. W. Connell, followed by an outline of the views on masculinity in the volume *Gender and the First World War*, with specific attention to historian Jason Crouthamel's work on the conceptions of the masculine ideal in the trenches. Thirdly, I will examine Sarah Cole's views on male friendship and comradeship during the Great War in *Modernism, Male Friendship and the First World War*. Lastly, I will discuss Jessica Meyer's *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*. Meyer distinguishes between martial masculinity and domestic masculinity, which both formed part of the masculine identity of the men at the front.

First of all, Australian sociologist R. W. Connell's ground-breaking work on masculinity needs to be examined because she coined the term 'hegemonic masculinity'[1]. In her book *Masculinities* she argues that "hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (76). "Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and subordination of women" (Connell 77). Connell calls to attention the fact that

[1] R. W. Connell is now called Raewyn Connell.

> hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual. So the top levels of business, the military and government provide a fairly convincing corporate display of masculinity, still very little shaken by feminist women or dissenting men. It is the successful claim of authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony (though violence often underpins or supports authority). (Connell 77)

The cultural dominant group in society is perceived as the hegemonic group (Connell 78). In our society and at the time of the First World War, the masculine identity is distinguished as the most dominant one and therefore the term 'hegemonic masculinity' is applied correctly in this case. However, Connell points out that "within that overall framework there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men" (Connell 78). Connell also states that the arena of military violence is vital to the definition of 'hegemonic masculinity' in Western culture, as violence on the largest possible scale is the purpose of the military (Connell 213). "The figure of the hero is central to Western cultural imagery of masculinity and armies have freely drawn on this imagery for purposes of recruitment" (Connell 213).

Lastly, Connell indicates in *Masculinities* that the imagery of masculine heroism is culturally relevant:

> Something has to glue the army together and keep the men in line, or at least enough in line for the organization to produce its violent effects. Part of the struggle for hegemony in the gender order is the use of culture for such disciplinary purposes: setting standards, claiming popular assent and discrediting those who fall short. The production of exemplary masculinities is thus integral to the politics of hegemonic masculinity. (Connell 214)

In the First World War the army and the government, made use of the masculine identity of the heroic soldier and its hegemonic status.

Secondly, in the book *Gender and the First World War* the authors refer to R. W. Connell's *Masculinities*. In their introduction to the volume, Christa Hämmerle, Oswald Überegger and Birgitta Zaar state that "soldierly masculinity was idealized in a far more powerful way during the First World War than ever before" (1). The prevalent concepts of masculinity and femininity were affected by the process of experiencing and carrying out war violence. Furthermore, the introduction references R. W. Connell's theory of 'hegemonic masculinity' quite extensively. The term 'hegemonic masculinity' is summed up in the introduction as "the most influential, most accepted or most idealized variation of masculinity permanently re/constructed by the ruling alliance of economy, military and politics. In contrast, other forms of masculinity are subordinated and marginalized (as well as all forms of femininity)" (4).

Additionally, in the fourth chapter of the volume, *Love in the Trenches: German Soldiers' Conceptions of Sexual Deviance and Hegemonic Masculinity in the First World War*, historian Jason Crouthamel argues that masculinities and feminization at the front are subjected to changes and should thus be considered as shifting concepts (4). The author indicates "how hegemonic masculinity was frequently threatened and undermined in the trenches by potentially homoerotic behaviour, relations, and experiences, which were considered to be 'feminine' of 'deviant'" (6). Crouthamel refers to R. W. Connell's 'hegemonic masculinity' by describing it as follows: "in opposition to subordinate forms of masculinity, perceptions and constructions of hegemonic masculinity were elusive, contested and always changing" (52). Crouthamel states that "while the all-pervasive image of the steel-nerved, disciplined warrior suggests an easily identifiable, militarized hegemonic ideal, this masculine image was fragile" (52). The author stresses that while

several soldiers adopted the "dominant, martial form of masculinity and sexuality, some still simultaneously experimented with emotions and behaviours that threatened the hegemonic ideal and were thus potentially 'deviant'" (Crouthamel 52). Comradeship became an important aspect of martial masculinity and heterosexual soldiers perceived it as a fusion of the 'masculine' comradely ideal with characteristics of nurturing, which were predominantly regarded as 'feminine' (Crouthamel 53). Furthermore, Crouthamel references a couple of historians, for instance, Michael Roper, T. Kühne and R. Nelson. Roper is vital because of his work *The Secret Battle*, in which he studies letters from the men at the front to their families at the home front. On the one hand, Roper asserts that the agonizing strains of warfare put a wedge between men and women. On the other hand, Roper illustrates that soldiers found the main sources of emotional support as well as survival skills in their relationships with women at home, which helped them to domesticize their lives at the front. Crouthamel concludes that soldiers accepted feminine traits, such as nurturing and offering emotional support, as it constructed an important part of the sense of comradeship between soldiers at the front (58-59). Furthermore, men found aid in surviving the war by adding feminine traits and emotions to their predominantly martial masculine identity (Crouthamel 59).

Additionally, in *Modernism, Male Friendship and the First World War*, literary scholar Sarah Cole examines male friendship and comradeship at the front in a broader sense than merely disguising homosexuality or sentimental adolescence. In contrast to the believes of many critics, the concept of male friendship at the front was rarely a private relationship established by personal feelings and intimacy between two soldiers (Cole 4). "Like any complex social relationship, friendship has its own conventions and institutional affinities (schools, universities, social clubs, as well as more rigidly arranged organizations from the Boy Scouts to the military platoon), and it is shot through with social meaning"

(Cole 4). During the Great War, the significance of male friendship intensified because cultural narratives, such as war and imperialism, became linked with for instance the power and possible loss of friendship, which were new concepts attributed to the war (Cole 3). Cole uses the phrase "organization of intimacy" to denote "the process of fixing and structuring male bonds," a prominent notion in literary texts during the First World War (4).

In her research, Cole observed that friendship was often seen as a "a bridging structure between individuals and institutions" which is an argument she will later contradict as male friendship during World War I fails as a long-term relationship (4). The comforting ideal of male friendship is often opposed by a "combination of internal contradiction (something in the structure of friendship) and external or historical constraint" (influenced by the stress of fighting at the front), this results in "a cycle of failure or disappointment" (Cole 6). Wounds, injuries, debility, disillusionment of the ideology of war, etc. caused the soldier to suffer the loss of the nurturing aspect of friendship (Cole 6). The technological aspect of the First World War conflicted with the vulnerability of the physical body of the soldier (Cole 8). The new horrific injuries of war confronted the commonly accepted views on masculinity and the division of body and mind (Cole 8). "One striking progression involves the body's devolution from idealized whole to broken ruin, from protected and nurtured to torn and abandoned" (Cole 8).

Cole begins her analysis of war literature by suggesting that, during the First World War, "comradeship was offered as a replacement for nearly all forms of human and social organization" (18). However, male friendship during the Great War resulted in the most vulnerable and upsetting relationships of all, as the destructive nature of the war ended a lot of friendships in death (Cole 18). Ultimately, male friendship does not offer comfort as the loss of a friend could have a traumatising effect and left the survivors alone and

embittered (Cole 18).

The prominence of male friendship during the First World War can be explained as a counterpart of the destructive nature of the war (Cole 138). The association of soldiers with a nurturing male friendship alludes to cultural values as loyalty and love (Cole 138). In short, male friendship shows a more humane side of the war (Cole 138). Cole strives to "demonstrate that comradeship did not function as the culture demanded, and that this failure generated a particularly resonant form of anger and bewilderment" (139). "In the official language of the war, comradeship was meant to sustain the soldier, to provide the possibility for heroic action, to redeem the horrific suffering that the war endlessly inflicted" (Cole 139). However, male friendships were ruined by the First World War as they often ended in bereavement and isolation (Cole 139). Thus, Cole argues that "the bracing imperative to organize and stabilize masculine intimacy became a futile enterprise, desperate and debilitating" (139). Most authors and critics do not differentiate between the concepts of 'friendship' and 'comradeship', however, Sarah Cole offers a new distinction between those two terms. 'Friendship' is applied to "individualized relations of amity or love between men" whereas the term 'comradeship' rather indicates "a corporate or group commitment, a relation particular to war and typically described in elevated language" (Cole 145). The term 'friendship' thus focusses on the individual while 'comradeship' suggests that soldiers are not individuals but merely function as a means to win the war no matter the cost (Cole 145). According to the military officials and organizations there is no conflict possible between both terms as 'comradeship' will always win over 'friendship' for "the simple reason that group solidarity always takes precedence over individual friendships" (Cole 146). Group identification is an important part of the construction of masculine identity (Cole 146). The First World War is responsible for terminating friendship in two main ways. On the one hand friends were killed on a daily basis and on

the other hand the military officials divided and separated friends without conscious thought throughout the duration of the war (Cole 148). Sarah Cole concludes that "the war fostered distance and self-protectiveness" instead of male friendship and intimacy (149).

Historian Jessica Meyer examines a range of personal narratives in her book *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War*. She specifically explores men's letters from the front, wartime diaries, letters of condolence and war memoirs. Meyer researches how British soldiers used their experiences of the First World War to define themselves as men, both in relation to other men and to women. At the beginning of the twentieth century, many made the association between participating in the Great War and the masculine ideal of physical and morally virtuous men (Meyer 3). Additionally, Meyer mentions that many social commentators of the Edwardian era expected the war to help "cure British society of the physical degeneracy of the working classes, exposed in Britain by the defeats suffered during the Boer War, and the moral degeneracy of the middle classes, evident in the continuing influence of Decadence as an artistic aesthetic" (3). Meyer further indicates that those British commentators argued that "war would turn these physical weaklings and moral degenerates into 'men' by exposing them to masculinizing experiences or eliminating them through violence" (3). Ultimately, alongside the more avant-garde figure of the soldier victim, Meyer argues that the figure of the soldier hero was able to maintain its status in British culture as one of the most long-lasting and dominant forms of idealized masculinity in the European/American cultural tradition (Meyer 6). The historian defines the figure of the soldier hero by possessing the qualities of courage, endurance, adaptability and duty (Meyer 6). "Despite the influence of the public schools and institutions such as the Boy Scouts in defining war and adventure as the ultimate spheres of masculine attainment, ideals of a more domestic form of masculinity also existed in British culture at

this time" (Meyer 6). The domestic aspect of the masculine identity refers to the soldier's role as a husband, a father and/or a son (Meyer 6).

Jessica Meyer's examination of men's letters from the front revealed that soldiers would assume both their domestic role as a provider and family member as well as their martial role as a member in the military forces (Meyer 15). Although, at the time, the soldier and his skills were considered the epitome of masculinity, many men had identities that focussed on other masculine norms that in the 19th and early 20th centuries were as important to discourses of masculinity as the norms of the soldier hero (Meyer 15). According to Meyer, these norms were those of the "dutiful son and the provident husband" (15). Despite the fact that many British soldiers acknowledged danger and discomfort in their letters to their families at home, a lot of soldiers regarded the war as an adventure which enhanced the development of men's characters (Meyer 15). "They were changing physically, mentally and spiritually becoming hardened to danger and learning how to endure" (Meyer 23). In addition to their physical development, the men described their experiences as "a process of moral and psychological maturation" (Meyer 24). The soldiers saw the war as a masculinizing process as well as a test of their ability to endure, and therefore, endurance quickly became one of the most commendable qualities of a soldier in the First World War (Meyer 23). Meyer argues that men's martial and domestic identities converged in their letters home "both in the language used to describe their lives as soldiers and in their on-going involvement with the home front, both in terms of hope and comfort it offered and the concern it gendered" (30). Additionally, Meyer argues that "the two identities were not only interlinked but also served to reinforce each other as can be seen in the reasons that men gave for enlisting, the most common of which was defence of the home" (34). Soldiers often fulfilled their roles as the protector of their family and country

as well as that of the provider (Meyer 35). This is a clear example of how martial and domestic masculinities are interlaced.

The author's investigation of wartime diaries yields different results as those diaries focus predominantly on military experiences at the front. Men's constructions of their martial identities are central in wartime diaries, their narratives focus on qualities of heroic masculinities, including endurance and adaptability (Meyer 49). Men felt free to express their complaints and disappointment in their diaries without having to comfort their families at home. Depictions of discomfort, fear, illness and horror are more predominant in their diaries than in their letters home (Meyer 49). "Diaries thus expressed the ways in which men constructed martial identities, separate from their domestic identities, that differed significantly from cultural ideals of the soldier as courageous, enthusiastic and resourceful" (Meyer 49). However, many soldiers preferred discomfort, fear and even horror above waiting for the action to commence. Waiting caused a lot of tension for many soldiers as "the static nature of trench warfare was described as both a frightening and frustrating experience" (Meyer 61). Therefore, men were eager to join the battle. They believed action in warfare would define their "soldiering as heroic" (Meyer 61).

In her exploration of letters of condolence, Meyer observes that "the language of condolence served to construct the dead in heroic images that may have offered comfort but also served to reduce the individual to a simplified ideal of what it meant to be both a soldier and a man" (75). Public war memorials were created to commemorate groups of known and/or unknown soldiers instead of a specific individual (Meyer 80). These memorials "hinted at popular classical and chivalric imagery and therefore drew on common cultural tropes of the middle classes" (Meyer 80). Known heroic death narratives were evoked by the war memorials with the intention of comforting the survivors and the people who lost someone during the war (Meyer 82). In these letters of condolence, the

fallen soldier was not only represented as patriotic but also as selfless because of his willingness to die for the cause of the war (Meyer 82). Many presented the nature of death itself as the biggest source of consolation as a soldier who found his death in military action gained a heroic status (Meyer 83). By dying in the war, soldiers had proven their superiority over all other men, even counting those still serving and their own family members (Meyer 83). The historian also points out that “a key aspect of Victorian masculinity was the father’s role as an educator of his sons” and the dead soldiers could, “as sources of moral inspiration to the communities they had left behind, still attain the role of educator and, therefore, the moral authority that was part of the ideal of mature masculinity” (84). Letters of condolence also offered an insight in the masculine identity of the soldiers at the front as they described the comradeship of fighting men as one of the most important aspects of masculinity even as they embodied a more traditional form of masculinity marked by their maturity (Meyer 89). Furthermore, they regarded calmness under fire as the epitome of courage and even the cheerfulness that men exhibited while under fire was highly praised (Meyer 87). The most important concepts of the masculine ideal of the hero in letters of condolence were sacrifice, patriotism, courage and duty (Meyer 96).

Another war genre examined by Jessica Meyer is the war memoir. Meyer calls attention to the sense of fatalism that had a profound impact on martial identity in the memoirs. Thus, the central Victorian idea of a sacrifice ennobling the death of youth was undermined by the fatalism recalled in those war memoirs (Meyer 138). In these war memoirs, fatalism was predominantly used as a way for the soldiers to protect themselves against the constant dread of the war (Meyer 138). According to Meyer, “these fatalistic views on the war threatened the fundamental Victorian ideals of masculinity, self-help and self-reliance given that those ideas were a denial of the soldier’s ability to exercise control over his fate and to act for himself” (139). The conditions of military service had the

potential to undermine the masculine identity of many soldiers, which ultimately resulted in a sense of the war's insensitivity and disillusionment (Meyer 136). In the face of danger and fear, fatalism offered the soldiers a kind of emotional self-protection, in contrast to callousness, which was a form of protection from the horrors of the war and the pity of others instead of fear (Meyer 139). The aspect of dehumanization in World War I memoirs shows how a diminished sense of self-determination wore the masculine identity of the heroic soldier down (Meyer 141). The genre of the war memoir offered a space for the men to "reconstruct their masculine identities as a soldier through redefinitions of the masculine ideals that warfare challenged. Courage and cowardice were redefined retrospectively to accommodate the fact that all men felt fear and were perilously close to showing it" (Meyer 141).

It becomes apparent from Meyer's thorough analysis of war memoirs that "courage was not simply identified by self-control, but also by the ability to regain self-control even after it had been lost" (142). According to Meyer, the quality of endurance is a product of war whereas Victorian and Edwardian masculine models stressed the notion of self-control. Endurance meant that soldiers were not only able to control themselves and their emotions in stressful and frightening situations but in the face of the never ceasing horrors of the war as well (Meyer 143). The lack of emotional response during an attack and the ability to control fear and to endure the dangers of the war were admired above all else, even strategic acts of bravery were not praised as highly as endurance (Meyer 144). To prove their masculinity, wounds and illness were to be endured and men had to suffer alongside their fellow soldiers. Although duty and endurance were fundamental to the construction of masculinity, a sense of comradeship proved to be the most prominent quality of all (Meyer 145). Meyer's research demonstrates that "comradeship not only justified war experience in retrospect but it was also presented as a solution to the disillusioning situation that many

ex-servicemen found themselves in after the war" (146). Thus, male bonding, contrary to the act of killing, predominantly defined martial masculinity in the First World War. The Great War memoirs stress the importance of comradeship as an important addition to the ideal of heroic masculinity, as the quality of being a good comrade was even more highly valued than being a good adventurer (Meyer 148). One of Meyer's final conclusions is that "the importance of audience in influencing men's narrative constructions of personal masculine identities indicates the extent to which such identities were structured as much by cultural discourses of appropriate masculinity as by direct experiences" (161).

In conclusion, this section outlined some principal discourses of masculinity and the First World War. First of all, the term 'hegemonic masculinity' is explored extensively as it is fundamental in the studies of First World War masculine identity. 'Hegemonic masculinity' is a term created by sociologist R. W. Connell and is applied to the dominant cultural group in society which is usually male. During the First World War the figure of the heroic soldier was considered the hegemonic masculine form. The military and government exploited this ideal to force more men to join the action at the front lines. In *Gender and the First World* war, Connell's 'hegemonic masculinity' is referenced and explored multiple times. Jason Crouthamel shows that 'hegemonic masculinity' is often threatened and undermined in the trenches by, for instance, homoerotic behaviour. Furthermore, Crouthamel states that many soldiers conformed to the hegemonic masculine ideal while experimenting with other emotions that were considered deviant. This suggests that the hegemonic masculine ideal was fragile. In addition, Sarah Cole offers different views on male friendship and comradeship in *Male Friendship and the First World War*. The war effectively destroyed friendships and left survivors behind in bereavement and isolation. Cole also distinguishes the term "friendship" from "comradeship" as the former implies amity or love between individual soldiers whereas the latter rather indicates a group

commitment which arose from the war. Lastly, Jessica Meyer's work *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War* in Britain is explored. She examines the personal narratives of men at the front and concludes that martial and domestic masculinities are interlinked and are mutually part of the masculine identity of soldiers at the front. According to Meyer, duty, courage, endurance and comradeship were represented as the most essential qualities of the masculine identity of the figure of the heroic soldier. The views discussed in this section, will be used to analyse the discourses of masculine of *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters* in the following chapters of this master thesis.

2.2 Shell Shock and the First World War

In this section I will explore shell shock and the Great War. Shell shock has been extensively studied by literary scholars and historians and is often referred to as neurasthenia. It is related to the masculine identity of soldiers during the First World War as it threatened the ideal of the courageous soldier who did not fear the enemy. A lot of female authors have written about shell-shocked soldiers, for instance, Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* and Rebecca West in *The Return of the Soldier*, which are now considered some of the most well-known literary works on neurasthenia. Both *Death of a Hero* by Richard Aldington and *Across the Black Waters* by Mulk Raj Anand feature a male protagonist who displays symptoms of shell shock. However, in contrast to Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, both novels do not explicitly mention shell shock and neither are their protagonists diagnosed with the nervous disorder. Shell shock is predominantly considered to be a phenomenon of the Great War, as for the first time, high velocity and exploding shells made up an important part of the technology of war which resulted in terrifying and seemingly constant offensives (Bourke 109). In this section, I will be examining the works of prominent literary scholars and historians on shell shock, as it is an essential aspect in studies of masculinity during the First World War. Therefore, I will explore the views of well-known literary critic, Elaine Showalter, on shell shock and the parallels she draws to female hysteria in Victorian England in her work *Male Hysteria*. Secondly, I will examine historian Joanna Bourke's observations on shell shock and its relations to malingering in *Remembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*. Lastly, I will include a brief outline of the ideas of historian Peter Leese on shell shock and post-traumatic stress disorder from his study *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War*.

During the First World War, large numbers of soldiers were unable to cope with the

strains of this new kind of technological warfare. By the end of the war, the British military counted approximately 80.000 combatants diagnosed with shell shock. The nervous disorder became a serious medical and military problem by the end of 1914. Charles S. Myers, a medically trained psychologist, was employed by the British army to investigate the patients suffering from the nervous disorder. Myers believed that the shells exploding in the proximity of his patients were the common cause of their symptoms. He assumed that the physical force or the chemical effects of those exploding shells at a close distance produced the symptoms of neurasthenia (Showalter 167). Consequently, the nervous disorder became known as 'shell shock'. An inaccurate term, as further research at the time proved that shells did not cause neurasthenia, as some of the men who suffered from shell shock were remote from the exploding shells (Showalter 168). Furthermore, the breakdown of fatigued and recovering men developed itself gradually, which demonstrates that the term 'shock' was incorrect as well (Showalter 168). However, the term 'shell shock' remained the most popular among the soldiers and beat other alternatives such as 'anxiety neurosis,' 'war strain,' and 'soldier's heart' (Showalter 168). Peter Leese illustrates that the symptoms of shell shock included "withered, trembling arms, paralysed hands, stumbling gaits, tics, tremors and shakes as well as numbed muteness, palpitations, sweaty hallucinations and nightmares, all of which might constitute the outward signs of mental distress" (3). The image of the shell-shocked soldier, who was thought of as emotionally incapacitated, provided an astounding contrast to the figure of the heroic soldier and the masculine ideals of the period (Showalter 169). The military highly valued and stimulated the ability of soldiers to endure the unhygienic circumstances of the trenches, the persistent noise and the endless risk of death with stoic good humour (Showalter 169). Emotional repression was a fundamental characteristic of the British masculine ideal, as complaining was thought of as 'unmanly' because it was more often considered to be a feminine trait

(Showalter 169). Men suffering from shell shock were often burdened with additional guilt as it was believed that the "shell shock of individuals reflected on the performance of the group as a whole" (Showalter 170). This undoubtedly put more strain upon the neurasthenic soldiers. In addition, the fighting men also experienced emotional disturbance due to "chronic conditions of fear, tension, horror, disgust and grief; war neurosis was regarded as a way to escape the unbearable reality of the war, a compromise negotiated by the psyche between the instinct of self-preservation and the prohibitions against deception or flight, which ideals of duty, patriotism and honour rendered impossible" (Showalter 170). Thus, shell shock challenged the British masculine ideal of the heroic soldier. Therefore, soldiers who showed physical symptoms of shell shock were often mistaken for malingerers and liable to be shot for cowardice (Bourke 94).

In the second chapter of *Remembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, historian Joanna Bourke focuses on shell shock and malingering during the First World War. According to Bourke, malingering or shirking was not the only response to the physical threats of the war. She divides the alternatives to malingering in a period of war into the following three broad categories: firstly, she distinguishes "men who enthusiastically adopted the risk of blood sacrifice," secondly, "those who clothed themselves in a mantle of stoicism" and lastly "those who gave up the fight and took the ultimate revenge on their own bodies" (Bourke 77). Men most typically coped with the physical destruction of the war by determinedly ignoring their dangerous surroundings and shortening their perceptions of time in addition to stoicism (Bourke 77). Suicide on the other hand was rare even though it was a crucial option to a minority (Bourke 77). Joanna Bourke considers malingering as "simply another response to the public responsibilities of masculinity" (77). Both during the war and in periods of peace, malingering or shirking was considered an avoidance of a soldier's duty to the state and other men (Bourke 78).

Often, the only weapon left to the malingerer was his own body as that was the only object that he still owned (Bourke 81). Self-mutilation was the most extreme form of shirking and gunshot wounds were considered as the most devious form of malingering (Bourke 83). As shell-shocked soldiers were often unable to fulfil their duties, they were often thought of as malingerers.

Bourke further examines how shell shock became associated with malingering by exploring how the mentally ill were previously analysed by medical experts. The historian indicates that throughout the period preceding the First World War, patients were customarily divided into "two distinctive groups, namely, the organically ill and the imaginary ill" (108). Only in the late nineteenth century were these distinctions slowly put into question by a number of specialists. However, those experts were mostly limited to those interested in hysteria. Bourke states that the rigid distinction made between body and mind became blurred by the wartime experience of shell shock (108). "Although this instinct was primarily applied to men's emotional and physical reactions under shell-fire, attempts were made by medical officers back from the war to apply this lesson to a much broader range of industrial and social processes" (Bourke 108). Bourke indicates that ultimately they failed in their mission as "in the longer term, men whose bodies were tortured by their minds gained little – if anything – from the furious debates surrounding shell shock" (108). Medical officers failed in improving the condition of many men suffering from neurasthenia, or in other words, "the war left these servicemen stranded in no-man's land, isolated from both the sane and the insane" (Bourke 109).

In *Male Hysteria*, Elaine Showalter studied shell shock at the beginning of the First World War, a condition at times also described as 'male hysteria', and compared it to views on female hysteria in the nineteenth century of Victorian England. Showalter argues that shell-shocked soldiers were cases of male hysteria that changed the basic concepts of the

English psychiatric practice (167). The ideology of absolute and natural difference between men and women, previously formed the foundation of the English psychiatric system, which was clearly challenged by the signs of male neurosis in Great War soldiers (Showalter 167-168). Neurasthenia was often seen as a form of opposition to the First World War and challenged the social expectations of masculinity during the war (Showalter 170-171). The First World War presented a "crisis of masculinity" and severely tested the Victorian ideals of masculinity (Showalter 171). "When all signs of physical fear were judged as weakness and where alternatives to combat, like pacifism, conscientious objector, desertion and even suicide, were viewed as unmanly, men were silenced and immobilized and forced, like women, to express their conflicts through the body" (Showalter 171). This is reminiscent of the treatment of 'hysterical women' in the Victorian era. Thousands of men suffered from male hysteria during the war as they found themselves in unbearable conditions of stress and were expected to remain courageous throughout their service (Showalter 171). The literary critic continues her statement with a comparison of shell shock to female hysteria by arguing that "if the essence of manliness was not to complain, then shell shock was the body language of masculine complaint, a disguised male protest not only against the war but against the concept of 'manliness' itself" (172). Showalter draws distinct parallels between female and male hysteria by describing their outbreaks as a form of protest against society (172). In late Victorian England, the epidemic of female hysteria was "a form of protest against a patriarchal society that enforced confinement to a narrowly defined femininity" while during the First World War, the epidemic of male hysteria was "a protest against the politicians, generals, and psychiatrists" (Showalter 172). However, it was rarely mentioned that the fighting men suffered from 'male hysteria', as 'shell shock' remained the preferred term among soldiers. The term 'shell shock' offered a more masculine alternative to the term 'hysteria', which was previously mainly associated

with feminine illnesses and traits (Showalter 172). ‘Shell shock’ also veiled the disturbing parallels between the outbreak of female disorders in the Victorian period and male war neurosis (Showalter 172). Showalter makes a final comparison to female hysteria by describing the different diagnoses and treatments soldiers and officers received primarily based on the class distinctions which are “consistent with late Victorian moralistic and class-oriented attitudes towards hysteria and neurasthenia in women” (174). The medical officers believed that intention alone separated the shell-shocked soldier from the malingerer (Bourke 110). Nonetheless, it became increasingly difficult for the War Office to claim that so many servicemen were malingerers, as the shell shock patients were predominantly experienced soldiers who would have spent at least ten months in combat abroad (Bourke 111). Many of the soldiers suffering from shell shock had won medals for valiant behaviour under shell fire and proved themselves keen to return to the front. If these soldiers were marked as cowards, they would have to receive punishment as malingerers (Bourke 111). However, the morale of the troops would be destroyed by the executions of so many soldiers (Bourke 111). Ultimately, the War Office became dedicated to get shell shocked soldiers back into active service in order to reduce shortage in man power (Bourke 111). In addition, the motivation of the military authorities to accept shell shock as a pathological or psychological condition was caused by the fact that many men suffering from shell shock were from a high social class (Bourke 112). This reinforces Showalter’s comparison to the diagnosis and treatments of female hysteria in the Victorian period and shell shock based on class distinction. However, among the men at the front, no one doubted that all soldiers could suffer from shell shock, without distinctions of class, age and strength (Bourke 114).

Peter Leese’s study on shell shock and the First World War in *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* also corresponds to

Joanna Bourke's findings as both history scholars illustrate that shell shock was associated with insanity, cowardice and even malingering. These negative associations were common in the military, as the nervous disorder was viewed as a danger to the morale of the men at the front and often resulted in a shortage of manpower (Leese 5). Additionally, Leese's work is consistent with the research of Joanna Bourke regarding the different possible causes of shell shock. He states that "barrage and battle, the hard labour of fighting and surviving, meant a constant physical struggle against exhaustion; feelings of isolation, helplessness and extinction imposed a further psychological strain" (Leese 26). The historian also underlines that stress and trauma were not limited to the soldiers involved in active battle as lower levels of combat could cause trauma in soldiers just as strongly (Leese 26). Although, like Bourke, Leese points out that every soldier could suffer from shell shock as physical exhaustion and long sessions of intense fighting was alternated with periods of calm, quiet and boredom: this were the daily stresses of the war at the frontlines and even the strongest men might break under these conditions (27). The historian also mentions other responses to the horrors of the war as aside from neurasthenia, men could become demoralized or brutalized (27). "More successful adaptation to the circumstances of combat was achieved by holding to the affective framework of army life, for example by turning to regimental tradition, to superstition or religion, and metaphorical frameworks within which to assimilate the experience of war" (Leese 27). Finally, Peter Leese points out that, in this day and age, 'shell shock' would be called 'post-traumatic stress disorder'. Leese views "post-traumatic stress disorder, like shell shock before it, as the product of historical conditions: of the particular institutions where patients were treated, of the preconceptions brought by those who treated it and those who suffered it" (10).

Both Joanna Bourke and Elaine Showalter state that the shift in the medical explanations of shell shock altered the treatment and punishment of neurasthenic soldiers.

At the beginning of the war the nervous disorder was understood to be an “organic illness caused by the violent concussion of a nearby exploding shell that paralysed the *nervi nervorum*” (115). Exploding shells in the narrow space of the trenches caused a ‘commotional shock’ as “the sudden rise of atmospheric pressure produced minute haemorrhages in the brain” (Bourke 115). Psychological arguments finally gained sway by the middle of the war, as Charles S. Myers maintained his claim that the emotional disturbance of the war caused shell shock, as neurasthenia was also identified in soldiers who had never been near a shell at all (Bourke 115). The historian adds that other medical officers believed “neurasthenia to be a ‘reactive’ disorder, as they presumed that shell shock was a failure of psychological adaptation” (115).

Many different theories were explored during the war. These different theories also resulted in distinctive treatments of neurasthenic men, ranging from rest, dietary regimes and massages to electric treatments (Bourke 116). The latter treatment was enforced by doctors who considered men suffering from shell shock to be malingerers and as a direct consequence the treatment included a torturous component (Bourke 116). Alternatively, treatments based on psychological explanations of neurasthenia included “persuasion and re-education” as well as hypnosis (Bourke 116). Bourke emphasises that suggestive psychotherapy was one of the most important psychological cures as “an ‘atmosphere of cure’ was created in a ward and where patients were provided with simple explanations for their incapacities, together with easy remedies” (117). As a result, Bourke indicates that due to psychological interpretations of shell shock, “neurasthenia came to be treated as though it were a disease of the ‘will’, rather than of ‘nerve force’” (117). This development meant that the mentally ill were progressively held responsible for their own illnesses (Bourke 117).

In conclusion, shell shock was a common phenomenon in the British army during the First World War. The medical officers often did not agree on the same causes of neurasthenia which resulted in various distinct treatments. Shell-shocked soldiers were frequently perceived as malingerers at the beginning of the war until the military accepted the nervous disorder as a real issue. The nervous disorder has a wide range of symptoms from nightmares to tremors. Furthermore, men suffering from shell shock experienced guilt and shame as the disorder of an individual was believed to reflect on their entire group. Elaine Showalter relates shell shock to female hysteria of the Victorian period and suggests that shell shock is the soldier's way to complain against the masculine ideal of the heroic soldier during the war. Showalter's, Bourke's and Leese's ideas do not dispute each other, but rather built on each other. Bourke's research adds the element of malingering to Showalter's study and Leese compares shell shock to our modern notion of 'post-traumatic stress disorder'. Shell shock was a response to the horrors of the war which is present in the novels *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters* as well. Bourke distinguishes suicide as another possible opposition to the war and a way to escape the strains of modern warfare, which can be related to the death of Uncle Kirpu in *Across the Black Waters*.

2.3 Views on Indian Masculinity

Indian masculinity and Indian participation in the First World War have been studied less extensively than Western European participation and discourses of masculinity. The lack of sources due to the illiteracy of many Indian soldiers and a mostly oral culture have made it difficult for scholars to study Indian masculinity during the Great War. In this section, I will draw upon the work of historian Heather Streets and her extensive research of the 'martial races' ideology, literary scholar Trevor Dodman's study of Indian shell shock and the extensive work on the experience of Indian sepoys in the First World War by literary scholar Santanu Das and historian David Omissi. The military term 'sepoy' refers to an infantryman in the Indian Army, primarily drilled under British discipline (Omissi xii). The term is derived from the Persian word *sipahi* which means 'soldier' or 'horseman' (Omissi xii; Das "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe" 393). Both Das and Omissi have studied letters from Indian soldiers and their families. By the end of the First World War, over 1.27 million Indian men were recruited to join the war; 827,000 of them were combatants who served in various far-off places like France and Belgium in Europe, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Gallipolli, Palistine and Sinai, and East and West Africa (Omissi 4; Das "The Indian Sepoy in the First World War"). This thesis will mainly focus on the sepoy experience in Europe. In this section I will outline the historical and cultural discourses of Indian masculinity before and during the First World War.

I started the section "British Views on Masculinity" by outlining R. W. Connell's views of masculinity and specifically the term 'hegemonic masculinity'. Indian soldiers, and the Sikhs in particular, have regularly been described as 'martial race' soldiers. The 'martial races' ideology originates from the nineteenth century and refers to the "belief that some groups of men are biologically or culturally predisposed to the arts of war" (Streets 1). Instead of the British ideal of the heroic soldier, the dominant figure of the 'martial race'

soldier can be interpreted as the hegemonic masculine ideal for Indians. In *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* Heather Streets indicates that Scottish Highlanders, Punjabi Sikhs and Nepalese Gurkas were considered to be among the 'martial races' (1). The 'martial race' soldiers established the new hegemonic ideal of masculinity in the military and public eye. They were thought of as the most masculine and ferocious warriors of the British Empire (Streets 1). Streets indicates that the Rebellion of 1857 in India was one of the vital moments in the conception of the 'martial race' theory. The Indian Rebellion was an uprising against the British rule in India. The Indian and British masculine ideologies were renegotiated through the Indian revolt as the Rebellion functions as a "crucible" (Streets 11). The British officers framed the Rebellion as an attack on British women and children by the savage Indians. This incited an outrage in Britain which allowed the British to brutally end the uprising (Streets 11). From that moment onwards the term 'martial race' became effectively integrated in the military and the popular public discourse (11). The Anglo-Indian military elites embraced the 'martial race' ideology and the "savage representations of masculinity" in an attempt to manipulate politics on a global and imperial level after 1850 (Streets 1). The historian points out that the word 'race' in the 'martial race' ideology plays an important part and she indicates two opposing ways to interpret its meanings and functions (6). On the one hand, she asserts that 'race' "must be located within the larger context of shifting racial ideologies during the second half of the nineteenth century, as part of an increasingly 'scientific' understanding of race as a set of objective, biological characteristics" (Streets 6-7). On the other hand, she notes that "paradoxically, 'race' must be understood as a consciously manipulated linguistic and performative tool: in other words, as an artificial strategy of rule during a period of imperial anxiety" (Streets 7). However, the 'martial race' belief and the concept of race in general were not invented in the 1850s nor were they

exclusively British ideas (Streets 7). Before the British colonizers arrived, Indian civilizations marked themselves and others as either 'warlike' or 'peaceful' (Streets 7). Still, the historian states that the 'martial race' ideology is not only about 'race' as the 'martial race' combatants "came to be 'gendered' as ideally masculine" (10).

During the First World War the 'martial race' ideology was applied to the recruitment of the Indian forces as most sepoys belonged to the "peasant-warrior classes of North and North-Western India," with the majority of these warriors coming from the Punjab, a region in the North of India (Das "The Indian Sepoy in the First World War"). Mulk Raj Anand himself was born in Peshawar, and his main character in *Across the Black Waters*, Lalu, comes from a peasant family in the North of India and thus belongs to the 'martial race' region which formed the basis of the British recruitments during the First World War. The Indian forces further consisted of three different religious groups: Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, which made it a "multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious" army (Das "The Indian Sepoy in the First World War"). Anand's main character, Lalu is a Sikh, whereas most other secondary characters are Hindus in the novel.

As regiments were made up entirely of men, the military created "cultures of masculinity" based on their essential requirements of "discipline, loyalty and fighting efficiently" (Streets 11). Cowardliness was considered a feminine quality and soldiers had to actively distance themselves from these traits as the military stimulated combatants to adopt 'masculine' behaviour which consisted of demonstrating wild courage, the endurance of physical suffering and the ability to fulfil orders to kill without hesitation (Streets 10). The racial stamina of the 'martial race' soldier in combination with the essential needs of loyalty, honour and devotion created a "particular brand of masculinity" which was created by the change of imperial masculine values near the end of the nineteenth century (Streets 11). Historical worldwide events and anxiety about feminine traits, and not the military

culture of the time, lay at the foundation of the construction of the Indian masculine identity of the ‘martial race’ soldier (Streets 11). The savage quality which lay at the basis of the ‘martial race’ hegemonic ideal of masculinity, was expected to wipe out emotions “such as softness, weakness, vulnerability and faithlessness” as those were generally deemed feminine traits (Streets 12). During the Victorian era, the use of the ‘martial race’ terminology in the military and the media also influenced British views of masculinity (Streets 13). Whereas previously the idea of ‘muscular Christianity’ was considered to be the masculine ideal of the British upper and middle classes, the figure of the imperial soldier gradually came to the foreground (Streets 13). Qualities like “physical fitness and Christian morality” were no longer thought of as the epitome of masculinity, as “loyalty, reckless bravery, strength and willingness to fight” became the most highly esteemed qualities of the imperial soldier (Streets 13). The ‘martial race’ soldiers became the “alter ego of British men”, as they were expected to defend Britain’s interests without posing questions and were thought of as “the colonised, simple, violence-prone imperial subjects” (Streets 227).

Even though there are many dissimilarities between Highlanders, Sikhs and Gurkhas, all these ‘martial race’ groups had problems in common as well. The representation of the ideal ‘martial race’ soldier as “fierce, loyal and courageous” conflicted with their experiences as “poor, uneducated men” (Streets 191). The fact that many of these ‘martial race’ soldiers joined up because of economic difficulties was easily ignored by the British public and the military (Streets 227). At the end of the nineteenth century, Highlanders, Sikhs and Gurkhas had only one identity in the public eye, which was strictly associated with their fierce and martial qualities and values (Streets 227). The impact of the martial race discourse resulted in a “masculinised, stylised vision” of the regions which produced ‘martial race’ warriors. This masculinised vision was easily accepted by outsiders like the British public and at times by the people from these ‘martial race’ regions

themselves (Streets 219).

Trevor Dodman builds on Heather Streets' 'martial race' research in his investigative work on Indian shell shock. Considering the fact that the Indian Army made up most of the British colonial forces, it is astonishing that Indian soldiers were not diagnosed with shell shock as such during the First World War. In *Shell Shock, Memory, and the Novel in the Wake of World War I*, Trevor Dodman calls attention to the lack of information about "Indian psychiatric casualties" and sepoy shell shock (155). The surviving war documents show that not a single one of the Indian soldiers was diagnosed with shell shock or neurasthenia (Dodman 155). Dodman discerns two possible causes for the so-called absence of shell shock in the Indian forces. First of all, the British officials in the military firmly applied the 'martial race' ideology to the Indian Army. To admit that mental breakdown or shell shock emerged in the 'martial race' forces, would have effectively declared 'martial race' theory as a falsehood, therefore preventing the recruitment of Indian soldiers who were supposedly 'built' for warfare (Dodman 156-158). Secondly, many soldiers remained silent because of the "warrior caste mentalities" to which their fellow sepoys and officers "subscribed"; these mentalities defined the traditional models of "Indian male subjectivities" (Dodman 158).

At the start of the First World War, the supposed 'martial race' populations made up three-quarters of the Indian Army (Streets 225). Many of the Indian sepoys decided to participate in the war for domestic or political reasons. In the first place, Indian sepoys would receive pensions and land to farm on. Secondly, the Indian population believed that their cooperation in the war would improve their chances of gaining more independence from Britain (Dodman 144).

In "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe, 1914-18: Archive, Language and Feeling", Santanu Das explores the realities of the Indian sepoys service in France during the First

World War. As sources on the lives of the Indian sepoys at the front were limited, Das resorted to studying sound recordings, the censored version of the sepoy's letters home and a few literary texts (Das "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe" 394). In the Punjab, a northern region of India, only five percent of the population knew how to read (Das "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe" 398). The families at home involved the postman or the schoolmaster of the community to read the letters they received from their family members at the front (Das "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe" 398). Those letters would then be read aloud for the entire family. Tthis was often how Indian sepoys communicated with their families at home (Das "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe" 398). These letters revealed the feelings of the Indian soldiers at the front but the reader should also the censorship into account, which will be discussed in the next paragraph. As the Indian sepoys encountered, for instance France, a new land with unknown people and a different culture, a country they had to defend (Das "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe" 398). Upon arriving in a new country, the Indian sepoys experienced a mix of emotions such as "thrill, wonder, excitement, fear, terror, horror, homesickness, grief, envy and religious doubts" (Das "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe" 398). The Indian sepoys, however, never fully integrated in Europe as they also experienced "separation, segregation, loneliness, and industrial warfare" (Das "Indian Sepoy Experience in Europe" 399). These emotions strayed from the 'martial race' ideology, as the Indian forces were supposed to be fierce and loyal.

In *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters, 1914-18*, historian David Omissi extensively studies the correspondence between the Indian soldiers and their families at home. These letters have stood the test of time mainly because of censorship (Omissi 4). Translated passages from the Indian letters were preserved in the reports of British censors. This presents the scholar with a couple of problems as the censorship, self-

censorship and the possible interference of the scribe need to be taken into account (Omissi 9). From the letters it becomes clear that the substantial losses, which were much higher than ever before in the Indian Army, were shocking to the Indian soldiers (Omissi 10). The Indian forces firmly believed in the honour of fighting but morale among the troops diminished because of the cold and wet weather during the winter of 1915 (Omissi 10). These circumstances could cause Indians to suffer from self-inflicted wounds, thoughts of malingering and overall feelings of hopelessness (Omissi 10). During the spring the morale of the Indian soldiers improved but remained fragile (Omissi 10). In order to avoid the risk of a widespread weakening of morale in the coming winter, the General Staff ordered the Indian infantry to change locations and fight in the Middle East (Omissi 10). However, the letters illustrate that the Indian forces became accustomed to the circumstances and horrors of the war and their morale did not drop again in the winter of 1916 (Omissi 10). Omissi calls attention to the fact that even though the sepoys became more accustomed to the war, they appeared to be resigned to their fatal fate and accepted that they most likely would not survive the war (Omissi 11). Not unlike the British soldiers, the Indian sepoys went through "a cycle of exhilaration, despair and resignation" (Omissi 11). The Indian Army was perceived as a "mercenary force" and the martial recompenses and aspirations of promotion were highlighted in their letters home (Omissi 11). The most important motive to fight, however, were the conventional anxieties about shame and honour (Omissi 12). Indian soldiers believed it was one of the greatest honours to die in battle or even to become a martyr (Omissi 12). Religion, caste and clan defined the identity of an Indian soldier (Omissi 12). As the military was extremely gendered, shame became the worst possible blow to a soldier's masculinity as cowardice was considered a feminine trait (Omissi 12). Fighting and obtaining medals had the power to elevate the status of the clan or caste (Omissi 12). Most of the letters home contained only minor complaints like pay and family

allowances and missed opportunities at promotion due to a change in post. In addition, some soldiers even used drugs at the front which was heavily frowned upon by the military officials (Ommisi 14). The biggest cause of complaint in the beginning of the war was the fact that the soldiers who suffered from lighter wounds, upon recovery immediately had to return to the front, while the Indian soldiers strongly believed they had earned the right to return home (Omissi 14).

In conclusion, the Indian sepoys joined up for very different reasons than the British soldiers. On the one hand, their motives were domestic as they would be granted pensions and land to farm on. On the other hand, politics were important as well, as it was commonly believed that joining the war would further India's claim of independence from imperial Britain. The most striking difference with the British soldier is the 'martial race' ideology which provided the Indians with their 'hegemonic masculinity' as so-called wild savages born to fight in the war. Heather Streets argues that the 'martial race' theory became difficult to oppose by the outsiders as well as insiders and had an enormous impact on the recruitment of the Indian Army as more than half of the Indian soldiers came from the north of India, which was specifically regarded as the 'martial race' region. Trevor Dodman's research of sepoy shell shock illustrates that no Indian soldier officially suffered from shell shock as the British medical officers did not want to ruin the image of the fierce and loyal 'martial race' soldier. In addition, the Indian soldiers themselves remained silent because of the traditional views of their fellow soldiers and officers. Both Santanu Das and David Omissi provide us with the realities of the Indian sepoys during the First World War by studying their correspondences with their families at home. Fighting brought great honour while shame and cowardice were not tolerated as those were considered to be feminine qualities.

3. Literary analysis

3. 1. Richard Aldington's First World War Novel *Death of a Hero*

Death of a Hero, first published in 1929, was Richard Aldington's debut novel. Before the First World War, Aldington was known as a journalist, poet and editor of literary magazines. Like his colleague, Ezra Pound, Aldington was part of the Imagist movement. The early twentieth-century Imagist movement valued free verse, French Symbolism and more pronounced visual representations. In 1914, at the beginning of the First World War, Aldington wanted to enlist in the British army but was unable to do so due to a childhood hernia. In 1916, Aldington did enrol in the army as a private and later served as a signals officer during the Great War. The author was posted in Flanders and France. Aldington survived the war but suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder and chronic bronchitis afterwards. His novel *Death of a Hero* can be interpreted in many different ways as it includes characteristics of both a war memoir and a modernist novel. First of all, both the narrator and George Winterbourne, the protagonist, share some similarities with Aldington himself. Like Winterbourne, Aldington had a relationship with two women. Aldington was married to Hilda Doolittle and also had a mistress, Dorothy Yorke. This is clearly paralleled in *Death of a Hero*, as George Winterbourne is married to Elizabeth and simultaneously has a relationship with Fanny. In addition to these parallels to Aldington's life, his colleagues and fellow artists, Ezra Pound, Ford Madox Ford, D. H. Lawrence and T.S. Eliot are also included in the novel. Aldington changed their names into Upjohn, Shobbe, Bobbe and Tubbe respectively; they are artists, the colleagues and peers of George Winterbourne. In addition, the novel's reflection on art, the questioning of morals and Winterbourne's search for the truth, display the modernist elements in *Death of a Hero*.

Literary scholar and historian Paul Fussell and historian Jay Winter have explored the modes of remembrances in war literature. On the one hand, Paul Fussell argues that the

main way of understanding, remembering and writing about the war is through the use of irony (35). The ironic mode of remembering allows authors to critique the war as it creates distance from their own experiences through the use of irony (Fussell 35). On the other hand, Jay Winter argues for a more affective perspective on war literature as writing about the war can have a therapeutic effect by honouring the deceased soldiers (5). Winter illustrates that traditional forms of writing have a familiarity which can help the mourners cope with loss during and after the First World War (5). Both these views can be applied to Aldington's anti-war novel *Death of a Hero*. The narrator and George Winterbourne make ample use of irony in the novel while the narrator also frequently mentions that he is writing this novel to honour and commemorate his friend George Winterbourne. The narrator hopes to atone for the many casualties of the war by writing this book. The novel makes use of references to Greek mythology to describe the war and the main characters, as the world is "cursed like Orestes, and mad, and destroying itself, as if pursued by an infinite legion of Eumenides" (Aldington 24). Elizabeth and Fanny are compared to Achilles and Hector while Winterbourne is related to Patroclus (Aldington 15). These are examples of traditional forms of writing in *Death of a Hero*, as the traditional mode of storytelling makes use of classical, religious or romantic forms and imagery (Winter 3).

In this chapter, I will explore if R. W. Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' of the heroic soldier is present in Aldington's novel *Death of a Hero*. In other words, I will examine if the ideal of masculinity in the novel conforms to Connell's idea of 'hegemonic masculinity' at the time. Additionally, I will relate Jessica Meyer's views on domestic and martial masculinity to *Death of a Hero*. Thirdly, I will examine the views on friendship and comradeship between soldiers at the front in the narrative as those are important aspects in the construction of the soldier's masculine identity. I will apply Jason Crouthamel's and Sarah Cole's ideas to them. Lastly, I will analyse the presence of shell shock in *Death of a*

Hero as an aspect related to masculinity and determine how this deviates from the masculine ideal and 'hegemonic masculinity'.

R. W. Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' denotes the socially and culturally dominant group of men. At the time of the First World War, the masculine ideal was that of the heroic soldier who fought bravely in the war to defend his country. The most valued qualities of the heroic soldier were endurance, adaptability, duty and courage (Meyer 6). Even though, *Death of a Hero* is considered an anti-war novel, traces of the masculine ideal of the heroic soldier can be found in the narrative. The title alone refers to this ideal. However, it quickly becomes clear in the novel that George Winterbourne was not a war hero and certainly did not die as one. The narrator questions whether Winterbourne committed suicide by standing directly in the line of fire instead of seeking cover. In that sense alone, the title *Death of a Hero* is ironic and deviates from the masculine ideal of the heroic soldier, courageously fighting and dying for his country. The examination of the ironic title alone would suggest that the masculine ideal and 'hegemonic masculinity' are not represented in the novel.

Upon further analysing the novel, I did come across references and representations of the masculine ideal of the soldier hero. When Winterbourne enlisted in the army and finished his training, he finds himself on board of the ship that will bring the new recruits to France and consequently, the frontlines as well. On the ship, he observes servicemen on leave. He describes them as "the real war soldiers, fragments of the first half-million volunteers, the men who had believed in the War and wanted to fight. They made a kind of epitome of the whole army" (Aldington 227). Winterbourne is immediately intrigued by these soldiers and describes them as "strangely worn and mature, but filled with energy, a kind of slow, enduring energy" (Aldington 228). The protagonist is undeniably attracted to this form of masculinity. "In comparison, the fresh faces of the new drafts seemed babyish

– rounded and rather feminine" (Aldington 228). The discourses of masculinity of the heroic soldier profoundly avoided any associations with feminine qualities throughout the war. Thus Winterbourne's comparison of the new recruits and himself as appearing more feminine or even "babyish" seems to fit into the masculine ideal of the time. This becomes even more evident when Winterbourne further reflects on the men who volunteered at the beginning of the war:

> These men were men. There was something intensely masculine about them, something very pure and immensely friendly and stimulating. They had been where no woman and no half-man had ever been, could endure to be. There was something timeless and remote about them, as if (so Winterbourne thought) they had been Roman legionaries or the men of Austerlitz or even the invaders of the Empire. They looked barbaric, but not brutal; determined, but not cruel. Under their grotesque wrappings their bodies looked lean and hard and tireless. They were Men. (Aldington 228)

This appears to confirm the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' and the ideal masculinity of the heroic soldier. Winterbourne aspires to become one of them as he believes them to be greatly superior to women and "half-men" (Aldington 228). In this moment, the men who fought at the front are the essence of masculinity to Winterbourne. He feels inferior to them and in their presence, he even feels humiliation and shame (Aldington 228).

The martial and domestic identities of the soldiers are interconnected and reinforce each other, as for instance most men joined the war in order to defend their families at home (Meyer 34). Winterbourne's martial identity is more at the centre of the novel than his domestic one. During the First World War, the ability to endure the challenging conditions of trench life and battle became a soldier's most praiseworthy skill (Meyer 23). Winterbourne determines he "must" endure the hardships and horrors of the war as this is

the "common fate of the men of his generation" (Aldington 261). In the end, however, it becomes clear that Winterbourne was unable to endure the strains of the war as he presumably committed suicide. Furthermore, the ability to endure was the not the only quality which made up the martial identity of the British combatants. Winterbourne mentions on several occasions that waiting for the action to commence or to get posted was worse than actively serving in the trenches and being under shellfire. This confirms Jessica Meyer's observations that waiting caused a lot of tension and often resulted in a frightening and frustrating experiences (61). Meyer also indicates that feelings of discomfort, fear, illness and horror also made up the martial aspect of the masculine identity, which are all experienced by Winterbourne (49). As an anti-war novel, disillusionment of the war is a prominent theme. Feelings of disappointment in the war, politics and officers are present and Winterbourne experiences horror when he sees soldiers die in front of him, to the point of seeing these haunting images in his dreams. He often comments on the physical discomforts of the war, like for instance the cold weather, as well.

Winterbourne's domestic identity as a son and husband in *Death of a Hero* is not as prominent as his martial identity. The protagonist's role as a son is downplayed as he does not communicate with his parents during his war service. Upon his death, his parents do not show great emotions. His father did grieve and pray for his son's soul but did not live long afterwards, while his mother found the news of her son's death "rather exciting and stimulating at first, especially erotically stimulating" (Aldington 6). George's relationship with his parents did certainly not actively make up his domestic identity as a soldier. Aldington describes the parents of the protagonist in the ironic mode. His mother is portrayed as rather heartless, uncaring and obsessed with sex and money. The generation of his parents have different values and morals than his own generation. However, another side of domestic masculinity is the role of the husband. Winterbourne's marriage to

Elizabeth and his romantic relationship with Fanny mostly made up his domestic identity as a soldier. He writes them letters and visits them both on leave. During his service, he is constantly worried about them and "in the general disintegration of all things he had clung very closely to those two women" (Aldington 202). Elizabeth and Fanny gained "a sort of mythical and symbolical meaning for him" (Aldington 202). They were separated and detached from the horrors of the war. When he returned to London on leave, both Elizabeth and Fanny had found other men to replace him with. All the women in *Death of a Hero* are represented as unfaithful to their husbands or in Fanny's case, lovers. However, "for George they represented what hope of humanity he had left, in them alone civilization seemed to survive" during the war (Aldington 202). While Winterbourne was surrounded by death, violence and the callousness of the war, he believed "in them alone the thread of life remained continuous" (Aldington 202). "They were two small havens of civilised existence, and alone gave him any hope for the future" (Aldington 202). This confirms the traditional notion of masculinity and femininity. Traditionally, women are viewed as life-givers rather than life-takers. To the main character, Fanny and Elizabeth represent life among the horrors of the war. However, the stereotypical image of women as saints is altered in the novel as both women have flaws and are ultimately represented as rather indifferent to the protagonist's death. The stereotype of the woman as a femme fatale is present in the sense that Fanny, Elizabeth and even George's mother have multiple lovers throughout the novel. Additionally, Winterbourne's relationships with Fanny and Elizabeth were not the only significant relationships he had during the war.

Friendship and comradeship between the men at the front are often related to the masculine identity of the soldiers. I have previously outlined historian Jason Crouthamel's views on the fragility of hegemonic masculinity and how it was actually vulnerable and often challenged in the trenches by "potentially homoerotic behaviour, relations, and

experiences, which were considered to be 'feminine' of 'deviant'" (6). In the prologue of *Death of a Hero*, the narrator shares his strong opinions on friendship and comradeship and their possible deviations. "Let me at once disabuse the eager-eyed Sodomites among my readers by stating emphatically once and for all that there was nothing sodomitical in these friendships" (Aldington 19). Male friendships at the front "were a real and beautiful and unique relationship," however, this specific kind of human interaction did often not survive the end of the First World War (Aldington 19). The narrator clearly states this kind of male friendship was special and only occurred during the war. Unlike Crouthamel, the narrator believes these friendships to be pure and does not suggest -even refutes- any kind of homoerotic conduct. Friendship was a bond between ordinary men who frequently shared extreme, strained and dangerous experiences with each other, which led to "an undemonstrative exchange of sympathies" between regular soldiers (Aldington 19). However, these friendships never lasted long, as friends often got separated by the military, injuries or death. "When they separated, they would be glum for a bit, and then, in the course of a month or two or three, strike up another friendship. Only, the companionship was generally a real one, pretty unselfish" (Aldington 20).

During the Great War, Winterbourne struck up two significant friendships, one with the narrator during their initial training in Britain and one with Lieutenant Evans, his platoon officer. Winterbourne and the narrator hoped to be stationed in the same platoon but they only saw each other once after their training ended. Winterbourne's friendship with Evans ended when the Lieutenant recommended Winterbourne for a military promotion. Ultimately, both these friendships irreversibly ended with Winterbourne's death, even though this caused the narrator to tell the story of Winterbourne's life as a way of honouring and commemorating his deceased friend. Winterbourne's friendship with Evans is perhaps more surprising because if they had met before the war, Winterbourne

would in all likelihood never have befriended him. “Evans was the usual English public-school boy amazingly ignorant, amazingly inhibited, and yet ‘decent’ and good-humoured” (Aldington 258). As an artist, Winterbourne does not belong to the same circles and does not care for public-school boys and their rhetoric. Throughout the novel, George constantly questions the sense and meaning of the war and comes to the conclusion that the Germans are not truly the enemy. He considers, for instance, the politicians on both sides as the true enemy because they decided to start the war. This is juxtaposed with Evans’ opinion of the war as he does not have any doubts about the war and believed that every decision England made was just (Aldington 259). “Evans propounded this somewhat primitive argument to Winterbourne with a condescending air, as if he were imparting some irrefutable piece of knowledge to a regrettably ignorant inferior” (Aldington 259). The unflattering descriptions of Evans demonstrate George’s initial issues with his future friend. They do not share the same opinions about the war and at times even completely disagree. Despite the fact that “Evans possessed that British rhinoceros equipment of mingled ignorance, self-confidence, and complacency which is triple-armed against all the shafts of the mind” Winterbourne could not resist liking him (Aldington 259). His friendship with Evans became important to Winterbourne as it could at the time be considered as a substitute for the other relationships in his life. Through his public-school boy ethos, Evans adheres more closely to the ‘hegemonic ideal’ of the patriotic and heroic soldier than the protagonist. While Winterbourne resolutely condemns the war, Evans firmly believes in the war effort and the British empire. Thus, Evans is portrayed as the ideal soldier and is an example of Connell’s ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in *Death of a Hero*.

However, literary scholar Sarah Cole makes a distinction between the terms ‘friendship’ and ‘comradeship’. According to Cole, the term ‘friendship’ denotes “individualized relations of amity or love between men” whereas the term ‘comradeship’

signifies “a corporate or group commitment, a relation particular to war and typically described in elevated language” (Cole 145). The former term emphasizes the individual while the latter views soldiers as a instruments to win the war instead of individuals. According to the military, group solidarity will always triumph over individual friendships, in other words, ‘comradeship’ will always take precedence over ‘friendship’ (Cole 146). Winterbourne’s friendships were constructed during the war and did not last beyond it as he did not survive the war. It is not certain Winterbourne would have struck up a friendship with either the narrator or Evans if the war never happened. Therefore, their relationships could be considered as ‘comradeship’ as it was particular to the war. Even though Winterbourne feels a certain reverence for Evans and the ways in which the lieutenant copes with the horrors of the war, they are not often described in an elevated language. For instance, Evans and Winterbourne did not have much in common aside from their position in the war. There is however an amity between Winterbourne and both the narrator and Evans. Winterbourne’s impending promotion offers him new insights in his relationship with Evans as “he was amazed to find that he didn’t want to leave Evans, and suddenly saw that what he had done in the past months had been chiefly done from personal attachment to a rather common and ignorant man of the kind he most despised, the grown-up public-school boy” (Aldington 302). Despite their differences, Winterbourne did get attached to Evans, which reinforces Sarah Cole’s idea of ‘friendship’ as a personal relationship between two soldiers. Winterbourne keenly felt the loss of his friendship with Evans. “When Evans had gone, Winterbourne’s interest in the Company suddenly evaporated. He did not know the new officers, rather disliked the Captain, and of course was not on the same footing with them as he had been with Evans” (Aldington 304). More importantly, the loss of friendship influenced Winterbourne’s ability to operate as a soldier. “Winterbourne felt lonelier than ever. And he realised with disgust and horror that his nerve

was gone" (Aldington 304). This confirms Cole's statement that male friendships during the war were the most upsetting and vulnerable relationships of all and could have a traumatising effect (18).

Ultimately, Winterbourne does not strike up any other friendships during the war. All things considered, I would call Winterbourne's relationship with Evans a 'friendship' after all. As 'friendship' and 'comradeship' are not mutually exclusive terms, there are some elements of comradeship in their relationship as well. Sarah Cole's notion of 'comradeship' is further explored in *Death of a Hero* in one of Winterbourne's observations on the German soldiers. He reflects that the German combatants "were men with fine qualities, because they had endured great hardships and dangers not by hating the men who were supposed to be their enemies, but by developing a comradeship among themselves" (Aldington 232). Despite the destructive war, the German soldiers had saved something extremely important: "manhood and comradeship, their essential integrity as men, their essential brotherhood as men" (Aldington 233). This is not a reference to individual and private friendships but rather indicates Cole's concept of 'comradeship' as it is particular to the war and is seen as a group commitment. 'Comradeship' could, therefore cross beyond the enemy lines. Winterbourne feels a certain kind of kinship with the German enemy soldiers as they are both in the same situation caused by the political decisions of their respective countries. Manhood can be interpreted as humanity but it could also be understood as a form of masculinity. Even though, the soldiers endure hardships and horrors of the war, they still retain their humanity, honour and values.

Friendship and comradeship at the front were idealised by the military, even though those relationships were often the most traumatic of all as they frequently ended in death. The notions of friendship and comradeship therefore do not contradict the ideal 'hegemonic masculinity' of the heroic soldier. Winterbourne's friendship with Evans and the narrator

strengthen his aspirations of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ while the loss of his friendship with Evans results in loneliness and loss of his nerve and courage, which is ultimately in conflict with Connell’s concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and the idealised figure of the heroic soldier. Masculinity in *Death of a Hero* is depicted in a more complex way than originally thought. The ironic mode of storytelling in the novel often coincides with a break from the hegemonic masculine ideal whereas the use of classical references and imagery frequently represent the highly valued masculinity of the heroic soldier.

The hegemonic masculinity and masculine ideals in *Death of a Hero* are further challenged by Winterbourne’s anxieties and worries. Winterbourne was never officially diagnosed with shell shock; however, the novel repeatedly alludes that Winterbourne might suffer from this nervous disorder. Winterbourne frequently seems to be worrying about everything: about the war, his relationships with Elizabeth and Fanny, his duties as a soldier, etc. The narrator interprets Winterbourne’s anxieties in the following way: “‘worry’ is not ‘caused’ by an event; it is a state which seizes upon any event to ‘worry’ over. It is a form of neurasthenia, which may be induced in a perfectly healthy mind by shock and strain” (Aldington 201). Additionally, relentless anxieties, uncontrollable diarrhoea and stomach cramps are symptoms of war neurosis (Bourke “Shell Shock during World War One”). Winterbourne displays most of these symptoms as he was under strain from shellfire, vermin in the trenches, lice, diarrhoea and his constant worries. Emotional repression was highly valued as a part of the British masculine ideal. Consequently, complaining was considered to be ‘unmanly’ (Showalter 169). The many deprivations, hardships and dirt in the trenches made Winterbourne feel humiliated, ashamed and degraded. Before the war, these things would have been intolerable but during his service, he had to lower his standards of personal hygiene eventually, which made him very uncomfortable at first. However, after a while of active service, this too becomes accepted

as part of the normal state of being at the front. The demanding physical aspect of the war was not Winterbourne's main issue. "He suffered mentally; suffered from the shock of the abrupt change from surroundings where the things of the mind chiefly were valued, to surroundings where they were ignorantly despised" (Aldington 217). His former interests lost all their appeal to him; he is no longer able to concentrate on reading and all his cherished faculties become useless during the war. Only the physical labour counted. As Winterbourne became more depressed and started to lack emotion, his friends and even Elizabeth and Fanny became distant and unimportant to him (Aldington 225). "For Winterbourne, the battle was a timeless confusion, a chaos of noise, fatigue, anxiety and horror" (Aldington 293). He lost track of time and started to forget other things. Winterbourne consciously realized how this affected him, his life and personality (Aldington, 293). Winterbourne's confusion, fatigue and anxieties are symptoms of shell shock. The narrator remarks that "he looked unaltered; he behaved in exactly the same way. But, in fact, he was a little mad. We talk of shell-shock, but who wasn't shell-shocked, more or less?" (Aldington 293). Physically, Winterbourne remained the same, psychologically the war altered him profoundly in two distinct ways. Firstly, "he was left with an anxiety complex, a sense of fear he had never experienced, the necessity to use great and greater efforts to force himself to face artillery, anything explosive" and secondly, "with a profound and cynical discouragement, a shrinking horror of the human race" (Aldington 294). Aside from these direct references to shell shock by the author, Winterbourne also experiences other symptoms of neurasthenia. Fatigue, tremor and shakes, trembling arms, confusion, nightmares and hallucinations are all known symptoms of shell shock. Winterbourne struggled to sleep after witnessing the death of a Corporal, a vision which continued to haunt him. Shell explosions in his vicinity cause him to shake while explosions make his teeth chatter. He was tormented by the cold, fatigue and lack of

sleep. Hallucinations appear to be less common but in his hallucinated memories, “images and episodes met and collided like superimposed films” (Aldington 269). The overt references to shell shock are further reinforced by the presence of these symptoms of neurasthenia.

Shell shock was often the only way for the male’s body to complain, it was not only a complaint against the war but “against the concept of ‘manliness’ itself” (Showalter 172). Winterbourne’s anti-war attitude is evident from the beginning even though he is fascinated by the soldiers who have fought at the front and idealises their masculinity. He aspires to obtain the same level of masculinity by joining the fight but gradually starts to suffer from shell shock. Thus, shell shock in *Death of a Hero* can be interpreted as a form of complaint against the masculine ideals, the politicians and war officials of the time, which confirms Showalter’s views. Aldington emphasizes Winterbourne’s shell shock symptoms several times, literally mentioning shell shock or neurasthenia so the reader would not have any doubts about it. As *Death of a Hero* is an anti-war novel, Winterbourne’s shell shock is evidently one of Aldington’s forms of protest. Ultimately, the protagonist commits suicide because he wanted peace, peace from his worries about Fanny and Elizabeth and peace from the constant strain he had to endure during the war.

To conclude, this analysis of *Death of a Hero* illustrates the fragility of the ‘hegemonic masculinity’ of the idealised heroic soldier. The novel acknowledges the masculine ideals and actively incorporates them but ultimately disrupts these ideals as Winterbourne is the exact opposite of a hero. The protagonist clearly suffers from shell shock and does not receive any medical assistance to treat this. Winterbourne never truly admits his nervous disorder to others as that would be seen as ‘unmanly’ and Winterbourne aspires to become one of the soldiers who were considered to be the epitome of masculinity or in own his words, real men. Winterbourne’s constant mental suffering influences his

work as a soldier. Ultimately, Winterbourne breaks with the praised masculine ideals by committing suicide in order to experience some peace of mind. This is the extreme opposite of the death of a heroic soldier, which makes the title *Death of a Hero* greatly ironic. This is Aldington's way to express his anti-war beliefs and opinions.

3.2 Mulk Raj Anand's Indian World War I Novel *Across the Black Waters*

Mulk Raj Anand published his First World War novel *Across the Black Waters* in 1939. The Indo-Anglian writer was part of the influential Bloomsbury group, which included well-known authors Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster. Born in 1905, Anand was too young to participate in the Great War. His father on the other hand did join the war and inspired Anand's novel. *Across the Black Waters* is the second part of a trilogy about the main protagonist Lalu. The first book is titled *The Village* (1939) and the last book is called *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942). The trilogy tells the story of Lalu who becomes a sepoy in order to escape a prison sentence. With his service, he hopes to receive rewards in the form of land or perhaps a medal for bravery. *Across the Black Waters* is a bildungsroman, as the reader witnesses Lalu's journey and the ways in which he matures during his service. It is also considered a cross-cultural novel as in addition to the Indian culture, European cultures are portrayed as well which is evident from the fact that the Indian sepoys fight in Flanders and France. *Across the Black Waters* is often thought to be the greatest Indian war novel, as there are not as many Indian literary texts about the First World War, especially in comparison to the abundance of British texts. The Indian participation in the Great War is often overlooked. In his novel, Anand offers a critique of the Western representation of the First World War, which mainly left out the numerous Indian contributions and sacrifices to the war effort. Anand gives the Indian sepoys a voice which had largely been ignored in the past. The British empire recruited men from their various colonies, although India supplied the largest number of men: approximately 1.4 million Indians were conscripted during the First World War up to December 1919 (Das "Introduction" 4). The self-governing nations of the British empire provided an additional 1.3 million men (Das "Experiences of Colonial Troops"). Among these dominions were Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Newfoundland (Das "Experiences of Colonial Troops").

However in comparison to India, New Zealand's contribution of more than 100,000 men may appear rather small but proportionately five percent of New Zealand's recruits aged between fifteen and forty-nine were killed (Das "Experiences of Colonial Troops"). As history is written in the perspective of the oppressor or coloniser, Anand aims to remind his audience of the largely forgotten Indian involvement in the Great War in his novel *Across the Black Waters*. Additionally, in the former dominions of the British Commonwealth, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, service in the First World War often became part of their national identity whereas in India this was minimized by the ensuing nationalist fight for independence from Britain (Das "Introduction" 22). India's painful World War I history in combination with the struggle for independence resulted in a lack of war memorials and commemorations. In this manner, *Across the Black Waters* can be seen as a way to commemorate the sacrifices of the Indian forces. Anand rewrites the Indian First World War history "in keeping with Elleke Boehmer's ideas about the 'double process of cleaving': 'cleaving from, moving away from colonial definitions, transgressing the boundaries of colonialist discourse; and, in order to effect this, cleaving to: borrowing, taking over, and appropriating the ideological, linguistic, and textual forms of colonial power'" (Dodman 148). On the one hand, by writing a novel from the perspective of an Indian sepoy instead of the perspective of the British colonizer and by including Indian traditions and religions and figures like the goddess Kali, Anand moves away from colonial traditions. On the other hand, Anand takes over the textual form of a novel, the martial race ideology and the English language from colonialist Britain. The author wrote *Across the Black Waters* for a British audience as it is written in English. Furthermore, Anand incorporates famous events in the novel to attract the audience and to present Indian views on those topics. For instance, the Indian sepoys witness the well-known Christmas truce between the Germans and the British. They perceive this temporary truce as a strange and

foreign occurrence which they do not completely understand, yet they do try to participate by grabbing some cake. In this way, Anand firmly incorporates the Indian sepoys in the history of the First World War. Additional examples of Boehmer's concept of 'cleaving to' are the references to Joan of Arc after the sepoys arrive in France and the speech of Lord Roberts. Of this speech Lalu only hears "meaningless snatches" which subverts the original meaning into a speech which demonstrates the colonial power of Britain (Anand 192).

This chapter will examine R. W. Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' in Anand's *Across the Black Waters*. The Indian masculine ideal at the time was the 'martial races' theory which has been extensively studied by Heather Streets. Therefore, her views on the masculine ideal of Indian soldiers will be used to explore Anand's novel. Friendship and comradeship can support or destabilise the ideal of masculinity. These relations show a nurturing aspect of the soldiers while they endure the horrors of technological warfare. Therefore, I will apply Sarah Cole's views on the Indian war novel as well. Thirdly, I will study the elements of shell shock in the novel which threaten the masculine ideal of the fierce 'martial race' soldier. Lastly, this master thesis will explore if Jessica Meyer's ideas on 'domestic' and 'martial' identities make up part of Lalu's masculinity as well.

Across the Black Waters offers a distinct Indian perspective on the First World War. The Indian men adhere to the masculine ideal of the 'martial race' soldier. The 'martial race' ideology indicates that some groups of men are predisposed by their culture or genetics to fight wars (Streets 1). This is the 'hegemonic masculinity' of the Indian civilization as most Indian soldiers were recruited from the known 'martial race' regions in Northern and Western India, the Punjab in particular. The characters in *Across the Black Waters* are all originally from the Punjab region, as is the author, Mulk Raj Anand. The so-called 'martial race' sepoys belonged to the peasant-warrior classes. These characteristics

are all represented in Anand's narrative. Lalu is from the warrior caste, while the rest of his family members are predominantly farmers.

The Indian Army is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious as three different religious groups are represented: Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus (Das "The Indian Sepoy in the First World War"). All three religions are portrayed in *Across the Black Waters*. The main character, Lalu, is a Sikh. Sikhs can be recognized by their long hair which they hide under their turbans. Prior to joining the war, Lalu's hair was cut. Due to his short hair, he is separated from the other Sikhs into a different group. Lalu feels ashamed to be in the presence of other Sikhs because of his short hair. "He had made no friends among the Sikh company, because of his self-consciousness at being known to be a Sikh who was registered as a Dogra as he had had his hair cut, and he had not come very much into contact with the Punjabi Muhammadan company except once or twice when he had eaten the minced kababs which were a speciality of Muslim cooks" (Anand 132). This shows how Anand represents the different religions and cultures in his novel. Kirpu, Dhanoo and Havildar Lachman Singh, Lalu's friends and comrades, are Hindus. Lalu separates himself from their religion when a French soldier on the train to the front asks them which religion they belong to and points directly to Dhanoo, Kirpu and Havildar Lachman Singh. Lalu answers: "Hindu, all Hindus", "Rajputs" (Anand 60). Anand does not overlook the Punjabi Muslims, but they are reduced to small appearances while the Sikhs and Hindus are represented by more developed characters. The representation of the various religions in the novel demonstrates the multi-religious and multi-ethnic properties of the novel and show how the novel "transgresses the boundaries of colonialist discourse" (Dodman 148).

The narrative reinforces the 'martial race' theory in various ways. When the sepoys are ordered to go into battle, Lalu feels afraid. However, when the action is about to start,

Lalu adopts the behaviour expected of a 'martial race' soldier. "Somehow in a moment, he had become chock-full of anger and impatience, and the fear in him was smothered. He felt like a monster who would annihilate everything on his way" (Anand 147). This supports the idea of the fierce 'martial race' sepoy who fights with reckless bravery (Streets 191). The savageness of the 'martial race' combatants is confirmed and "in spite of the resurgence of fear, Lalu was master of himself now" (Anand 147). Even though the protagonist is frightened, the savage 'martial race' qualities emerge in him before going to battle.

In addition, "the stock martial image of the Sikhs as 'Lions', a self-fashioning that was indigenous to this religious group but was nonetheless enthusiastically promoted by the British colonial class" is present in *Across the Black Waters* as well (Das "Indian Sepoy Experience" 410). Anand's description of Lalu's attack on a German soldier makes use of this savage imagery of Sikhs as lions: "With instantaneous resolution, the boy stooped low like a lion on the prowl and charged him with his bayonet, fixing him with such force that the butt of his rifle resounded back on his chest" (148). However, Lalu himself is shocked by his aggressive reaction, "he had not suspected such cruelty in himself, but before his fear or pity could restrain him" he was interrupted by shellfire (Anand 148). Another use of the lion imagery in the novel is present in Kirpu's discourse after the death of Havildar Lachman Singh, a man Kirpu respected. Kirpu states that Singh was a lion and died a hero, "neither his hand, nor his heart was defiled by cowardice" (Anand 142). This reinforces the 'martial race' theory in the novel once more. Boehmer's ideas about the 'double process of cleaving' is illustrated by the use of the Indian imagery of warriors as lions and the 'martial race' masculinity which was emphasised by the British military and media.

Friendship and comradeship are an important theme in *Across the Black Waters*. Lalu's friendships with the other sepoys is a significant part of his masculine identity, as

these relationships further develop his identity as a soldier in the war. *Across the Black Waters* demonstrates Sarah Cole's ideas of 'friendship' as an individual relation of love or amity between men and 'comradeship' as a group commitment specific to the war (144-145). Lalu has a personal relationship with both Kirpu and Dhanoo. These two older men are more experienced in warfare although they are not familiar with this modern kind of combat caused by technological weapons such as, for instance, guns and planes. They are supportive of Lalu and help him construct his martial identity. In the beginning of the novel, Lalu is impulsive and curious about everything whereas Kirpu is more temperate and less tempted by the novelties of Europe. Nonetheless, Lalu admires and respects both Kirpu and Dhanoo. They are represented in the novel as father figures to Lalu which is apparent from the nicknames Uncle Kirpu and Daddy Dhanoo. Therefore, Lalu's relationships with Kirpu and Dhanoo are what Sarah Cole distinguishes as 'friendships'. *Across the Black Waters* also portrays Cole's notion of 'comradeship'. As the Indian forces have to leave their homeland in order to fight for the British, they feel a kinship with each other and they firmly believe they will be fighting the Germans together. This belief is quickly corrected by the military as the Indian forces will be split up and divided along the frontlines. "From the congregational life of their past and, more particularly, through the long journeys with thousands of sepoys, they had come to accept their togetherness as a law of nature and they had naively expected that they would all be put to fight side by side with each other" (Anand 84). After hearing this news, the sepoys feel inconsolable (Anand 85). Lalu regrets this separation even though he did not have much contact with the Sikhs and the Punjabi Muslims. "But now he felt lonely at the thought of that those two companies had been separated from his own" (Anand 132). This refers to a sense of comradeship because of their shared culture, the long trip to Europe and their motives to fight this war. This is more a group sentiment than a personal relationship between men which indicates Cole's concept

of ‘comradeship’. Aside from comradeship, there is also a lot of rivalry between the Indian soldiers. Lalu’s relationship with Lok Nath and Jemadar Subah Singh becomes strained when the latter two get promoted and attempt to use their newfound power to control Lalu out of a sense of jealousy. This rivalry eventually leads to the death of two soldiers, Kirpu and Hobson.

Lalu’s friendships give him courage to fight and endure the hardships of the war, their relationships give him strength and they all take care of each other. Dhanoo, and Kirpu in particular give Lalu advice and he seeks comfort in them. Dhanoo’s untimely death comes as a shock to both Kirpu and Lalu. They are irreversibly changed by this event. Kirpu appears broken and becomes more cynical of the war while Lalu gets nightmares and starts seeing Dhanoo’s ghost on the battlefield. Subsequently, friendships between soldiers at the front are the most fragile relationships of all. Most of these relationships did not last long as a lot of them ended in bereavement, which is demonstrated in *Across the Black Waters*.

The established ‘martial race’ form of masculinity is threatened on several occasions in the novel. On the train to the frontlines the sepoys pass another train which transports wounded soldiers and Lalu struggles to catch sight of the hospital train and its occupants from the doorway when the strong smell overpowers him (Anand 65). The other sepoys are crowded behind Lalu, so he cannot move away. The stench becomes too much for him and he faints. Kirpu immediately orders everyone to give Lalu some space and air. Lachman Singh, Daddy Dhanoo and Kirpu all show their sincere concerns about him. When Lalu awakes, he feels “angry and ashamed for his weakness” as this deviates from the ‘martial race’ ideal of masculinity (Anand 65). Fainting and swooning are associated with feminine qualities. This is one example of how the masculine ideal is challenged in the novel. However, the utmost threats to the ‘martial race’ masculinity in *Across the Black Waters* are represented by the many symptoms of shell shock Lalu experiences during the

war. Nonetheless, Anand never explicitly refers to shell shock or neurasthenia and Lalu is never diagnosed with the nervous disorder. This reinforces Trevor Dodman's views on Indian shell shock as he illustrates that no Indian soldiers were officially diagnosed with shell shock during the First World War by British officials. The signs of neurasthenia would have upset the established 'martial race' ideal of the Indian soldiers, an ideology the British military and media effectively enforced. Subsequently, to diagnose Indian soldiers with shell shock would be the same as denying the existence of the 'martial race' theory, which would prevent further recruitment of Indian soldiers, who are allegedly 'built' for combat (Dodman 156). This is what the British wanted to avoid at all costs. Additionally, the Indian sepoys remained silent because they all subscribed to the warrior-caste mentality which did not allow weakness in any shape or form (Dodman 158). In *Across the Black Waters*, Lalu does not receive any medical attention but he does experience symptoms of shell shock which he keeps secret from his fellow sepoys and even from Uncle Kirpu, who always gives him advice and only has Lalu's best interests at heart. In this manner, Anand's novel further confirms Dodman's beliefs on sepoy shell shock. When Lok Nath, one of Lalu's adversaries, explains the most vulnerable parts of the human body in a gruesome way in order to prepare the sepoys for the coming battle, Lalu's curiosity turns into fear and ultimately terror at the idea "of several bayonet points sticking into his own belly" (Anand 116). This causes Lalu to tremble involuntarily. In the face of the upcoming battle, Lalu feels like a frightened schoolboy who has forgotten his lessons, as "the dread loomed before his eyes, occupying the hollow of his body which shook against his will" (Anand 117). This demonstrates Lalu's signs of neurasthenia as the uncontrollable shaking of body and limbs is one of the symptoms of shell shock. Instead of feeling excited or curious, Lalu feels afraid and alone the longer the war continues. The mentalities of the Indian sepoys prevent Lalu from speaking out his terror and fear to his comrades. "He tried to steady himself so

that he could become neutral, like his companions, who sat patient and tranquil though rather pale and silent, as if they were reflecting on their doom and yet seeking to control their flesh from giving any sign of weakness, each to his own, as if everyone were alone in this ordeal" (Anand 117). This confirms the Indian masculine ideal, as weakness is predominantly thought of as a feminine trait. Lalu does not want to lose face in front of the other sepoys and be seen as weak and cowardly. After the battle, the sepoys notice that Daddy Dhanoo is missing. This has a vast impact on both Lalu and Kirpu. The images from the previous battle and his worries for Dhanoo's safety seem to haunt Lalu when he tries to sleep. "That night Lalu was crazed by dark thoughts which crumbled like agitated phantoms in his head and swirled before his sleep-weighted eyes" (Anand 122). Among the external signs of mental distress or shell shock are "withered, trembling arms, paralysed hands, tremors and shakes, sweaty hallucinations and nightmares" (Leese 3). Lalu experiences various of these symptoms of the nervous disorder after one of his first battles. "He tried to assimilate his quaking limbs. The vague weight of sadness for the missing Dhanoo, however, lingered like a ghost in the vacuum" (Anand 123). Lalu's limbs are shaking involuntarily and his worries about Daddy Dhanoo give him nightmares, which are both known symptoms of shell shock. "Towards dawn, as he still lay flue eyed, the panic of a nightmare shook the roots of his being" (Anand 123). Lalu's nightmare is about the Indian goddess Kali. In his dream, Kali summoned "rampaging hordes of demons, headed by Yama, the God of Death, with fencing stick and a shield in his hands fighting mock battles with his followers" (Anand 124). Lalu's nightmare results in battle and annihilation in which an Indian village is savagely destroyed. By incorporating Indian imagery, Anand moves away from the traditional colonialist discourse. Kirpu wakes Lalu from his nightmare because he found Dhanoo's body. When Lalu encounters Dhanoo's body, his features are frozen in "the widened stare of a horrible and lonely death" (Anand 127).

"Already Dhanoo looked like the ghost of himself as it would visit the dreams of his friends, distorted and frightening, yet pathetic" (Anand 127). Both Kirpu and Lalu will remain haunted by Dhanoo's death and mourn his untimely passing. Lalu is filled with dread because of the sense of "desolation and loneliness of these back trenches" (Anand 127). "Perhaps there were other bodies which lay drowned farther ahead and it would be more difficult than ever to sleep a dreamless night near these open graves of the dead" (Anand 127). In order to not show any weakness in front of the others, Lalu "pressed his lips tight, and ground his teeth lest he should lose his grip on himself, lest he should be seized by the grotesque terrors of the night in broad daylight, lest his imagination should burst into the demented murmurs of mad despair" (Anand 127-128). The horrible death of Dhanoo elevates Lalu's mental distress. After seeing his dead friend, Lalu fears this image will haunt him during the day as well whereas he previously only suffered from nightmares. Dhanoo "had always insisted on the performance of the last rites on his dead body," and as Dhanoo was deprived of his most important request after his death, his friends believed that "his unhoused ghost was still going round the trenches demanding ceremonial rites" (Anand 128). Dhanoo's ghost haunts Lalu when he is on duty which makes Lalu believe the horrors of the war and Dhanoo's spirit are chasing him. When he encounters a corpse, Lalu believes that "the ghost of the corpse, became the spirit of Dhanoo, and was pursuing him, for to his crazed brain it seemed as if the old man was following him about, chastising him, the adopted son, to offer the last rites on his body" (Anand 40). Lalu is experiencing a kind of hallucination, which is another symptom of shell shock. In addition to nightmares and hallucinations, the novel also presents other signs of shell shock, for instance the shakes and tremors that occur when Lalu wakes up and finds his "body convulsing with the tremors of a nightmare" (Anand 141). Around the same time and to Lalu's astonishment, the protagonist finds the more seasoned warrior Kirpu crying over the deaths of Dhanoo's and

Lachman Singh. “The boy had never imagined that the wise, cynical Uncle Kirpu would break down in the face of anything” (Anand 143). The horrors of the war and the death of his friends break Kirpu more rapidly than Lalu. When Lok Nath fails to demonstrate the power of his new rank over Kirpu, he decides to lock up the older sepoy in order to receive his punishment at a later point in time. This is the final straw for Kirpu and he decides to take his own life. Kirpu’s suicide shocks Lalu, as he never would have believed the older man to be capable of doing such a dishonourable act. The suicide of Kirpu marks the loss of all Lalu’s friends. As Joanna Bourke has previously indicated, there are many ways for the soldiers to cope with horrors of the war such as malingering, stoicism and shell shock. Suicide was the most extreme and despised way to escape the war. Suicide and shell shock are both represented in the novel.

This section has illustrated that the protagonist of *Across the Black Waters* clearly displays symptoms of shell shock which effectively threaten his ‘martial race’ masculine ideals. Lalu exhibits these signs unwillingly as he does not want to be regarded as a coward by the other Indian soldiers. A ‘martial race’ soldier who suffers from nightmares, shakes and tremors can no longer be considered a fierce, savage combatant loyal to the British empire. These men are allegedly genetically and culturally predisposed to fight and therefore cannot suffer from shell shock. Consequently, by incorporating signs shell shock in his novel, Anand refutes the ‘martial race’ theory.

The martial identity of Lalu has already been discussed but Jessica Meyer also distinguishes a domestic identity. The two distinct identities complement each other and are not mutually exclusive. Lalu is not married but he does have a family in India. On the one hand, the novel does not mention that he receives letters from his family, which could be due to the high illiteracy rate in India. On the other hand, the letter to his mother and family is featured in its entirety. Lalu’s domestic identity is attracted to the innovative ways

of farming in France. He wants to use the new farming techniques himself and writes about them in his letters. This shows the cross-cultural aspect of *Across the Black Waters*. Lalu's views on farming, among other things, change because of the modern techniques he witnesses in France. Jessica Meyer states that the martial identity of the younger men who enlisted was "less important for their future than their identities as civilian workers which had not had time to form prior to their enlistment" (39). This is partly the case for Lalu as well. To him, the war is an adventure; he is curious to see the European way of living and farming. The horrors of the war disillusion him, but he is still attracted to European cultures. Lalu joined the army to escape prison and in the hope to be rewarded for his service with farmland. Lalu's future as a potential farmer is important to him but this does not exclude the importance of his martial identity. The Indian mentalities are different than the British and the warrior caste and 'martial race' identity is never far from the protagonist's mind. The two identities complete each other.

In conclusion, *Across the Black Waters* represents the Indian perspective on the First World War. Boehmer's ideas about the 'double process of cleaving' are embodied in the novel as Anand transgresses the boundaries of colonialist discourse by introducing Indian cultures and religions to the British audience. The author also takes over traditional colonial elements such as the 'martial race' ideology. The 'hegemonic masculinity' of the Indian sepoys is the 'martial race' theory. This ideal masculinity is challenged throughout the novel. Lalu is at times associated with more feminine traits such as fainting, which causes the protagonist to feel extremely ashamed as it deviates from the masculine ideal. Lalu's symptoms of shell shock question the 'martial race' ideology the most, as the protagonist suffers from nightmares, hallucinations, shakes and tremors, which are decisively not any of the characteristics of the 'martial race' soldier. The novel *Across the*

Black Waters ultimately refutes the ‘martial race’ ideal of masculinity through Kirpu’s suicide and Lalu’s symptoms of shell shock.

5. Comparison of the Discourses of Masculinity in *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters*

This chapter will explore the similarities and differences of the discourses of masculinity in Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Across the Black Waters*. In both novels, the protagonists mature during the course of the novel. In *Death of a Hero*, the reader witnesses George Winterbourne growth and 'coming of age' story. The narrator depicts Winterbourne's life from his early childhood to his untimely death. Even though *Across the Black Waters* is the second part of a trilogy, Lalu matures as the story unfolds. By participating in the war and because of the loss of his friends, Lalu gains new insights and experiences. Therefore, both war novels have some formal characteristics in common such as the literary genre Bildungsroman. One of the differences between both authors, aside from their nationalities, is the fact that Aldington enlisted and fought in the war while Anand was too young to participate. Aldington's novel is mainly focussed on showing the futility of war and the author's anti-war perspective while Anand calls attention to the frequently overlooked Indian participation in the First World War. This chapter will compare the discourses of masculinity in both novels. First of all, I will analyse R. W. Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' in both narratives. Secondly, I will compare how the novels strengthen and weaken their respective hegemonic masculine ideals by studying the elements of friendship, comradeship, Jessica Meyer's concepts of 'martial' and 'domestic' masculine identity and shell shock in *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters*.

First, this chapter will compare the 'hegemonic masculinities' of the novels *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters*. As Aldington's novel offers the reader a British perspective on the First World War, the book adheres to the British 'hegemonic masculinity' of the heroic soldier. The masculinity of the heroic soldier is defined by the

following qualities: adaptability, endurance, courage, duty, comradeship and male bonding, honour, patriotism, self-control and sacrifice. The protagonist of *Death of a Hero* recognises this ideal and aspires to gain the status of heroic soldier by actively participating in combat. Winterbourne firmly beliefs that the epitome of masculinity is achieved by fighting in the war. The character of Winterbourne's lieutenant and friend Evans resembles the figure of the heroic soldier most closely as his public-school boy upbringing provides Evans with a firm belief in the British empire and the war effort. He follows orders without posing questions, he is courageous, dutiful, patriotic and he has honour and self-control. Despite their differences, Winterbourne strikes up a personal friendship with Evans, which is another important aspect of the masculine identity at the front.

The British ideal of the heroic soldier differs greatly from the Indian 'hegemonic masculinity' of the 'martial race' soldier. The 'martial race' theory indicates that Indian men, typically from the North of India, are genetically predisposed to fight wars. The 'martial race' soldiers were encouraged to dissociate themselves from feminine qualities such as softness, weakness, vulnerability, faithlessness and cowardliness (Streets 10-12). The most valued attributes of the so-called 'martial race' soldiers are discipline, inherent loyalty, honour, devotion, strength, willingness to fight, racial hardiness, reckless courage, the ability to endure brutal physical hardships and to kill when ordered. Most of these qualities are represented in *Across the Black Waters*. Lalu shows a willingness to fight, especially in the beginning of the novel and fights to kill when he is ordered to do so. The sepoys are depicted as loyal and fierce. The characteristics of the Indian 'hegemonic masculinity' are in part similar to the British masculine ideal of the heroic soldier as they share the qualities of honour, endurance and courageousness. The principal but significant difference is the imagery of the Indians as savage warriors who are encouraged to behave with reckless bravery. The Indians are allegedly 'built' to fight. The British soldiers are

believed to be superior to the Indian sepoys, which is displayed in Anand's novel. However, the Indians themselves feel inferior to the British but consider themselves to be better than the black soldiers from Africa as they have a paler colour. As both novels acknowledge their respective hegemonic masculine ideals, their established discourses of masculinity differ significantly from each other. However, as mentioned before, the 'hegemonic masculinity' at the front is fragile.

Friendship and comradeship at the front are an important part of the masculine identity of the soldiers. Historian Jessica Meyer has pointed out the "continuing importance of a martial masculine identity defined primarily by male bonding rather than the act of killing" (148). Her research of war memoirs has shown that comradeship and male bonding became one of the most valued qualities of masculinity among the soldiers themselves. In *Death of a Hero*, Winterbourne's friendships with the narrator and lieutenant Evans are important to him. Especially, his relationship with Evans gives him additional courage to endure the horrors of the war. Winterbourne even reveres the heroic qualities of his lieutenant despite their differences.

In *Across the Black Waters*, personal friendships and comradeship are central themes as well. Lalu's close relationship with Kirpu and Dhanoo shape his masculine identity. The Indian sepoys feel a comradeship with each other because of their shared background and culture while fighting in a foreign country. As stated in previous chapters, both novels incorporate Sarah Cole's views on 'friendship' as a personal relation of amity between soldiers and 'comradeship' as a group commitment specific to the First World War (145). The sense of comradeship is stronger in Anand's novel, as the Indian sepoys feel a commitment to each other as they are foreigners and fight for a British cause instead of their own. In contrast to the motives of the British soldiers to protect their families and homeland, the Indian sepoys fight to receive land to farm on and to obtain more

independence from Britain. This proves that friendship and comradeship are an important aspect of the masculine identity during the war for both the British as the Indian soldiers. This is one of the similarities between *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters*. An additional parallel between the two novels is the fact all the significant friendships end in death. In *Death of a Hero*, not his friends but Winterbourne himself dies and in *Across the Black Waters*, Dhanoo's body is discovered by Kirpu after a challenging battle. Later Kirpu commits suicide which leaves Lalu without his friends and father figures. As Sarah Cole has stated, friendship at the front was the most vulnerable relationship of all as friends regularly got separated by the military or death (148). The personal friendships in *Death of a Hero* confirm part of the 'hegemonic masculinity' of the heroic soldier. Friendship and comradeship were one of the most valued qualities by the soldiers themselves, as the nurturing relationship was regarded as a counterpart to the destructive nature of the war. Friendship and comradeship are not the main traits of the 'martial race' soldier but they are highly valued in *Across the Black Waters*.

Jessica Meyer discerns two distinct aspects of the masculinity of combatants in the First World War. On the one hand, men at the front possess a martial identity which is dedicated to fighting. On the other hand, soldiers have a domestic identity as a dutiful son or husband (Meyer 6). These masculine identities are not mutually exclusive. In *Death of a Hero*, Winterbourne is preoccupied with his role as a soldier, husband and lover. He aspires to become the epitome of masculinity by fighting in the war like ordinary men which constructs his martial identity. Additionally, Winterbourne is constantly worrying about Elizabeth and Fanny as well, which shapes his domestic identity as a husband and lover. His role as a son is downplayed throughout the novel. In Anand's novel, Lalu's martial identity as a 'martial race' soldier is at the centre of the novel. The protagonist is encouraged to show no weaknesses and to fight bravely. Lalu does not want to show any

vulnerabilities to his fellow soldiers even though he is often frightened. The ability to control his body and fears is important to Lalu because he does not want to appear cowardly in front of the other sepoys. Lalu's domestic identity displays itself in his correspondence with his mother and family as he fulfils the role of the dutiful son. Furthermore, the new culture and farming techniques of France intrigue him. Lalu hopes to implement these techniques on his family farm. Thus, Meyer's views on masculinity as a combination of the martial and domestic identities of soldiers is present in both novels.

The last aspect of comparison between the novels is the nervous disorder shell shock or neurasthenia. Characteristics of shell shock include tremors, shakes, nightmares, hallucinations, fatigue, confusion and insistent anxieties. In Aldington's novel, the narrator clearly implies that Winterbourne suffers from shell shock even though he was never officially diagnosed with the nervous disorder. The protagonist suffers from relentless anxieties about the war and the women in his life, Elizabeth and Fanny and is often fatigued, which are two symptoms of shell shock. Winterbourne also suffers from nightmares and the occasional hallucinations. Consequently, the overt references to neurasthenia made by the narrator are reinforced by the physical symptoms displayed by Winterbourne. Furthermore, the novel implies that the nervous disorder caused the protagonist to commit suicide. Thus, shell shock has a negative effect on Winterbourne's masculinity as suicide is not an aspect of the masculine ideal of the heroic soldier. Suicide is a direct opposition to heroism which makes the title of the novel ironic. Consequently, the symptoms of shell shock and Winterbourne's suicide show the fragility of the masculine ideal in the novel.
In *Across the Black Waters* shell shock is never specifically mentioned even though the protagonist displays numerous symptoms of the nervous disorder. Lalu suffers from shakes which he cannot control, vicious nightmares and hallucinations of the Dhanoo's ghost. The strains of the war are often too much for Lalu but he does not admit to having fears or

symptoms of neurasthenia because he does not want to appear weak in front of his fellow soldiers. This is an accurate representation of sepoy shell shock as Trevor Dodman has stated that on the one hand, British officials did not diagnose Indian soldiers with neurasthenia as that would essentially refute the 'martial race' theory. On the other hand, the Indian sepoys remained silent because they did not want to show any weaknesses in front of their peers and superiors. This demonstrates the warrior-caste mentality of the Indian sepoys. Lalu's symptoms of war neurosis do not result in his suicide even though the strains of the war compelled Uncle Kirpu to take his own life. *Across the Black Waters* ends with an unconventional conclusion as the protagonist is captured by the enemy. Even though Lalu displays severe symptoms of neurasthenia, he does not break down as completely as Winterbourne did. The protagonist's symptoms of shell shock refute the 'martial race' theory in the novel as it proves that Lalu was not genetically 'built' for warfare. It demonstrates the fragility of the masculine ideal and the inaccuracy of the 'martial race' ideology.

The authors approach the representation of shell shock differently because of cultural and historical differences in addition to their dissimilar motives for writing their narratives. On the one hand, Aldington makes use of the ironic mode of storytelling in order to portray Winterbourne's shell shock. Consequently, he refers more overtly to neurasthenia. On the other hand, Anand keeps the cultural and historical issues of the Indian sepoys in mind, which illustrates that sepoy shell shock was never officially acknowledged in the British and Indian armies and amongst the sepoys themselves. This suggests that, unlike Aldington, Anand could not overtly refer to shell shock and remain historically accurate.

In conclusion, both novels start from very different 'hegemonic masculinities' as the British men adhere to the ideal of the heroic soldier and the Indian sepoys are expected

to behave as ‘martial race’ warriors. The British and Indian cultures vary greatly from each other. The Indian sepoys speak a different language and participate in a war a long way from home. They must endure external oppression by the British as they are clearly considered inferior to the Europeans. Additionally, the sepoys also face internal struggles because of their caste system which creates different classes among themselves. However, both the Indian and British troops share the same war experiences. The war is devastating to both parties. They undergo the same pressures of the war and every single one of them has the potential to suffer from the symptoms of shell shock and encounter the ghosts of fellow soldiers. Even though both novels start from different views on masculinity, their shared war experience causes their respective masculine ideals to decline. The irony of the title *Death of a Hero* alone challenges the ‘hegemonic masculinity’ of the heroic soldier, as Winterbourne’s suicide is the opposite of a heroic death. *Across the Black Waters* challenges the dominant discourse of masculinity by refuting the ‘martial race’ ideology through the symptoms of shell shock. Despite their differences, *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters* are similar in the way they demonstrate the fragility of their respective ‘hegemonic masculinities’. In the end, Winterbourne and Lalu share a lot of similarities as they both suffer from the symptoms of shell shock. However, their cultural differences signify that they are not completely alike. They have different views on life. Shell shock has the same effect on their ideal of masculinity but they still vary on a cultural, religious and historical level.

Conclusion

This master thesis analysed the discourses of masculinity during the First World War in Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Across the Black Waters*. Aldington's novel offers a British anti-war perspective on the First Wold War while Anand's narrative represents the perspective of the Indian sepoys in the Great War. This master thesis researched the question how Aldington's *Death of a Hero* and Anand's *Across the Black Waters* represent the changing perception of masculinity. R. W. Connell coined the term 'hegemonic masculinity', which refers to the cultural dominant group in society (78). The British and the Indians viewed masculinity differently and this thesis examined whether the war had a similar impact on both views or if they are still exceedingly distinct from each other.

The British masculine ideal was the figure of the soldier hero who possessed the qualities of endurance, adaptability, courage, honour, self-control and patriotism. This ideal is acknowledged in *Death of a Hero* as Winterbourne believes that the epitome of masculinity is obtained by the soldiers fighting in the war. Alternatively, the Indian 'hegemonic masculinity' during the First World War is represented by the 'martial race' theory. Heather Streets defines this ideology as the idea that some groups of men are genetically or culturally 'built' to fight wars (1). These types of Indian soldiers originally came from the Punjab region in the North of India. The ideology is incorporated in Anand's novel *Across the Black Water*s as the sepoys display various 'martial race' qualities during combat throughout the narrative. For the most part, 'martial race' soldiers differ greatly from the British ideal of the heroic soldier, as the Indians supposedly fight savagely and with reckless bravery. The so-called 'martial race' sepoys were expected to distance themselves from feminine traits such as cowardliness, softness, weakness and vulnerability (Streets 12). The most valued characteristics of the 'martial race' sepoys are inherent

loyalty, honour and “racial hardiness” (Streets 11). Therefore, the ‘hegemonic masculinities’ of the British and Indian soldiers are significantly different.

In addition to the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, this thesis analysed Sarah Cole’s views on ‘friendship’ and ‘comradeship’, Jessica Meyer’s ideas of martial and domestic identities at the front and Elaine Showalter’s and Joanna Bourke’s views on shell shock, in order to investigate the changing perception of masculinity in *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters*. First of all, this thesis examined literary scholar Sarah Cole’s concepts of ‘friendship’ as a personal relationship of amity between two soldiers and ‘comradeship’ as a group commitment typical to the war in both novels (144-145). The research of historian Jessica Meyer illustrates the importance of friendship and comradeship in the construction of the masculine identity as these relationships were highly valued by the soldiers themselves (145). Both Aldington and Anand stress the importance of friendship as the protagonists develop strong friendships during the war. Winterbourne strikes up a friendship with the narrator and lieutenant Evans. Evans can be seen as Winterbourne’s counterpart as Evans embodies the masculine of the heroic soldier more closely. In *Across the Black Waters* Lalu has a personal relationship with Daddy Dhanoo and Uncle Kirpu. These two older sepoys serve at times as father figures to the protagonist. However, both novels demonstrate the fragility of friendships at the front as all significant friendships end in death. The sense of ‘comradeship’ is stronger in *Across the Black Waters* as the Indian sepoys form a strong bond on the journey to Europe and their shared culture. Winterbourne’s relations with other soldiers are not as prominent as his friendship with Evans but Cole’s notion of ‘comradeship’ is present in *Death of a Hero* as well. Cole’s concepts of ‘friendship’ and ‘comradeship’ do not mutually exclude one another. ‘Friendship’ and ‘comradeship’ offer the soldiers a masculine identity as a group.

Furthermore, this thesis studied Jessica Meyer's views on the martial and domestic identities of the soldiers at the front. In *Death of a Hero*, Winterbourne displays his domestic identity when he worries about his wife Elizabeth and his mistress Fanny. Thus, his role as a providing husband is not absent at the front. The martial identity of the protagonist is developed by his views on the ideals of masculinity and his participation in the war. In *Across the Black Waters*, Lalu's role as the dutiful son is not as pronounced. However, his letter to his family shows his domestic identity as a son and farmer. Lalu hopes to use the innovating farming techniques he witnesses in France on his family lands as well. Lalu's martial identity is at the centre of the novel as he is constantly worrying about living up the society's expectations as a 'martial race' soldier who cannot show any weaknesses.

Lastly, I invetigated the symptoms of shell shock in both novels. This thesis uses Elaine Showalter's and Joanna Bourke's research on shell shock as a framework. The protagonists of *Death of a Hero* and *Across the Black Waters* display symptoms of shell shock. In the Aldington's novel, these signs are explicitly linked to shell shock whereas Anand's narrative does not refer to neurasthenia directly. The symptoms of the nervous disorder indicate the deterioration of the 'hegemonic masculinities' of the period. Anand refutes the 'martial race' theory as Lalu presents signs of shell shock.

To conclude, this thesis argues that both novels present the dominant discourses of masculinity during the novel. However, Aldington ultimately refutes the ideal of masculinity of the heroic soldier through irony and shell shock. Anand offers a different perspective on the Indian sepoys as Lalu's symptoms of shell shock indicate the inaccuracy of the 'martial race' ideology. Thus, both novels deviate from their respective 'hegemonic masculinities', which implies that shell shock and the strains of the First World War had a similar impact on the masculinities of the British and Indian soldiers in *Death of a Hero*

and *Across the Black Waters*. However, the cross-cultural aspect of Anand's narrative needs to be taken into account as the novel was originally written for a British audience and the protagonist is influenced by the European culture he encounters during his service. On another note, I chose not to investigate the changing perceptions of the feminine identity during the Great War in both novels as the additional research would have been too extensive for this paper. Nonetheless, this is unquestionably interesting research material for future analyses and studies. The results obtained by this master dissertation can serve as a foundation for further analyses on femininity during the First World War and add new insights on the masculinity of British soldiers in comparison to the Indian sepoys in World War I literature studies.

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